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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENT  
OF THE  
ABOLITION  
OF THE  
AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE,  
BY THE  
BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

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*BY THOMAS CLARKSON, M. A.*

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ABRIDGED BY EVAN LEWIS.

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# ADVERTISEMENT.

**THE** Abridgement of the history of the Abolition of the Slave-trade, was undertaken from a persuasion that by condensing the work into the compass of a single volume, its more general circulation would be effected.

By the publication of a compendium of that history, presented in a cheap form, the important and instructive matter contained in it, would thus be more generally diffused among the people of this country; to whom every information which has a direct relation to the subject of slavery in general, is becoming more and more interesting. It was with these views that the work was undertaken, at the request of a committee of the American Convention of delegates from different Abolition Societies in the United States, which committee has recommended the publication of it in its present form.

The Abridgement however, is not designed to take the place of the *original* history, in our American Libraries. But it is hoped and believed that the reading of it will excite in many, a desire to possess the history from which this abridgement is made.

A few notes are added in this volume, which are marked with the letter "L," to distinguish them from the notes of the Author.

This abridgement is in the language of the Author, except where a trifling variation was requisite, to preserve a regular connexion between the parts selected for the present volume.



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# INTRODUCTION.

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I SCARCELY know of any subject, the contemplation of which, is more pleasing than that of the correction or of the removal of any of the acknowledged evils of life ; for while we rejoice to think that the sufferings of our fellow-creatures have been thus, in any instance, relieved, we must rejoice equally to think that our own moral condition must have been necessarily improved by the change.

That evils, both physical and moral, have existed long upon earth there can be no doubt. One of the sacred writers, to whom we more immediately appeal for the early history of mankind, informs us, that the state of our first parents was a state of innocence and happiness, but that, soon after their creation, sin and misery entered into the world. The Poets in their fables, most of which, however extravagant they may seem, had their origin in truth, speak the same language. Some of these represent the first condition of man by the figure of the golden, and his subsequent degeneracy and subjection to suffering, by that of the silver, and afterwards of the iron age. Thus it appears, whatever authorities we consult, that those which may be termed the evils of life existed in the earliest times. And what does subsequent history, combined with our own experience, tell us, but that these have been continued, or that they have come down, in different degrees, through successive generations of men, in all the known countries of the universe, to the present day ?

But though the inequality visible in the different conditions of life, and the passions interwoven into our nature, (both which have been allotted to us for wise purposes, and without which we could not easily afford a proof of the existence of that which is denominated virtue,) have a tendency to produce vice and wretchedness among us, yet we see in this our constitution, what may operate partially as preventatives and correctives of them. If there be a radical propensity in our nature to do that which is wrong, there is on the other hand a counteracting power within it, or an impulse, by means of the action of the Divine Spirit upon our minds, which urges us to do that which is right. If the voice of temptation, clothed in musical and seducing accents, charms us one way, the voice of holiness, speaking to us from within in a solemn and powerful manner, commands us another. Does one man obtain a victory over his corrupt affections? an immediate perception of pleasure, like the feeling of a reward divinely conferred upon him, is noticed. Does another fall prostrate beneath their power? a painful feeling, and such as pronounces to him the sentence of reproof and punishment, is found to follow. If one, by suffering his heart to become hardened, oppresses a fellow-creature, the tear of sympathy starts up in the eye of another, and the latter instantly feels a desire, involuntarily generated, of flying to his relief. Thus impulses, feelings, and dispositions have been implanted in our nature for the purpose of preventing and rectifying the evils of life. And as these have operated so as to stimulate some men to lessen them by the exercise of an amiable charity, so they have operated to stimulate others, in various other ways, to the same end. Hence the philosopher has left moral precepts behind him in favour of benevolence, and the legislator has endeavoured to prevent barbarous practices, by the introduction of laws.

But it seems to have been reserved for Christianity, under the Divine Influence, to give the best views of the nature, and of the present and future condition of man ; to afford the best moral precepts ; to communicate the most benign stimulus to the heart, to produce the most blameless conduct, and thus to cut off many of the causes of wretchedness, and to heal it wherever it was found. At her command, wherever she has been duly acknowledged, many of the evils of life have already fled. The prisoner of war is no longer led into the amphitheatre to become a gladiator, and to imbrue his hands in the blood of his fellow-captive, for the sport of a thoughtless multitude.

But in whatever way Christianity may have operated towards a diminution of human misery, it has operated in none more powerfully than by the new views, and consequent duties, which it introduced on the subject of charity, or practical benevolence and love. Men in ancient times looked upon their talents, of whatever description, as their own, which they might use or cease to use at their discretion. But the author of our religion, was the first who taught that, however in a legal point of view the talent of individuals might belong exclusively to themselves, so that no other person had a right to demand the use of it by force, yet in the Christian dispensation, they were but the stewards of it for good ; that those had no right to conceal their talent in a napkin ; but that they were bound to dispense a portion of it to the relief of their fellow-creatures. He was the first, who pronounced the misapplication of it to be a crime, and to be a crime of no ordinary dimensions. He was the first, who broke down the boundary between Jew and Gentile, and therefore the first, who pointed out to men the inhabitants of other countries for the exercise of their philanthropy and love. Hence a distinction is to be made both

in the principle and practice of charity, as existing in ancient or in modern times. Though the old philosophers, historians, and poets, frequently inculcated benevolence, we have no reason to conclude from any facts they have left us, that persons in their days did any thing more than occasionally relieve an unfortunate object, who might present himself before them. To Christianity alone we are indebted for the new and sublime spectacle of seeing men associate for the extirpation of private and public misery; and of seeing them carry their charity, as a united brotherhood, into distant lands.

Among the evils, corrected or subdued, either by the general influence of Christianity on the minds of men, or by particular associations of Christians, the African\* Slave trade appears to me to have occupied the foremost place. The abolition of it, therefore, of which it has devolved upon me to write the history, should be accounted as one of the greatest blessings, and, as such, should be one of the most copious sources of our joy.

To value the blessing of the abolition as we ought, or to appreciate the joy and gratitude which we ought to feel concerning it, we must enter a little into the circumstances of the trade. Our statement, however, of these need not be long. A glance only into such a subject as this, will be sufficient to affect the heart; to arouse our indignation and our pity; and to teach us the importance of the victory obtained.

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\* Slavery had been before annihilated by Christianity, I mean in West of Europe, at the close of the twelfth century.

The first subject for consideration, towards enabling us to make the estimate in question, will be that of the nature of the evil belonging to the Slave-trade. This may be seen by examining it in three points of view : First, As it has been proved to arise on the continent of Africa in the course of reducing the inhabitants of it to slavery ; Secondly, In the course of conveying them from thence to the lands or colonies of other nations ; And, Thirdly, In continuing them there as slaves.

To see it as it has been shewn to arise in the first case, let us suppose ourselves on the Continent just mentioned. Well then : We are landed ; we have just passed through one forest ; we are now come to a more open place, which indicates an approach to habitations. And what object is that, which first obtrudes itself upon our sight ? Who is that wretched woman, whom we discover under that noble tree, wringing her hands, and beating her breast, as if in the agonies of despair ? Three days has she been there at intervals to look and to watch, and this is the fourth morning, and no tidings of her children yet. Beneath its spreading boughs they were accustomed to play ; But alas ! the savage man-stealer interrupted their playful mirth, and has taken them for ever from her sight.

But let us leave the cries of this unfortunate woman, and hasten into another district : And what do we first see here ? Who is he that just now started across the narrow pathway, as if afraid of a human face ? What is that sudden rustling among the leaves ? Why are those persons flying from our approach, and hiding themselves in yon darkest thicket ? Behold, as we get into the plain, a deserted village ! The rice-field has been just trodden down around it. An aged man, venerable by his silver beard, lies wounded and dying near the threshold of his hut. War, sudden-

ly instigated by avarice, has just visited the dwellings which we see. The old have been butchered, because for slavery, and the young have been carried off, such as have fallen in the conflict, or have escaped a the woods behind us.

But let us hasten from this cruel scene, which give to so many melancholy reflections.

But whither shall we go? The night is approaching. Let us find some friendly hut, where sleep may make us forget for a while the sorrows of the day. Behold! a friendly native ready to receive us at his door! Let us accept of his kindness. And now let us give ourselves to repose. But why, when our eyelids are but just closed, do we find ourselves thus suddenly awakened? What is the meaning of the noise around us, of the trampling of the people's feet, of the rustling of the bow, the quiver, and the lance? Let us rise up and inquire. Behold! the infants are all alarmed! A wakeful woman has shown us a distant column of smoke and blaze. The neighbouring village is on fire. The prince, unfaithful to the duty of the protection of his subjects, has surrounded them. He is now burning their habitations, and seizing, as his booty, the fugitives from the flames.

Such then are some of the scenes that have been presented in Africa in consequence of the existence of the Slave-trade; or such is the nature of the evil, as it has shown itself in the first of the cases we have noticed. Let us now examine it as it has been proved to exist in the second; or let us examine the state of the unhappy Africans, reduced to slavery in this manner, while on board the vessels, which convey them across the ocean to other lands. And we must observe at once, that, as far as this part of the

concerned, I am at a loss to describe it. Where shall I find words to express properly their sorrow, as arising from the reflection of being parted for ever from their friends, their relatives, and their country ? Where shall I find language to paint in appropriate colours the horror of mind brought on by thoughts of their future unknown destination, of which they can augur nothing but misery from all that they have yet seen ? How shall I make known their situation, while labouring under painful disease, or while struggling in the suffocating holds of their prisons, like animals inclosed in an exhausted receiver ? How shall I describe their feelings as exposed to all the personal indignities, which lawless appetite or brutal passion may suggest ? How shall I exhibit their sufferings as determining to refuse sustenance and die, or as resolving to break their chains, and, disdaining to live as slaves, to punish their oppressors ? How shall I give an idea of their agony, when under various punishments and tortures for their reputed crimes ? Indeed every part of this subject defies my powers, and I must therefore satisfy myself and the reader, with a general representation, or in the words of a celebrated member of Parliament, that " Never was so much human suffering condensed in so small a space."

I come now to the evil, as it has been proved to arise in the third case ; or to consider the situation of the unhappy victims of the trade, when their painful voyages are over, or after they have been landed upon their destined shores. And here we are to view them first under the degrading light of cattle. We are to see them examined, handled, selected, separated, and sold. Alas ! relatives are separated from relatives, as if, like cattle, they had no rational intellect, no power of feeling the nearness of relationship, nor sense of the duties belonging to the ties of life ! We are

next to see them labouring, and this for the benefit of those to whom they are under no obligation, by any law either natural or divine, to obey. We are to see them, if refusing the commands of their purchasers, however weary, or feeble, or indisposed, subject to corporal punishments, and, if forcibly resisting them, to death. We are to see them in a state of general degradation and misery. The knowledge which their oppressors have of their own crime in having violated the rights of nature, and of the disposition of the injured to seek all opportunities of revenge, produces a fear which dictates to them the necessity of a system of treatment by which they shall keep up a wide distinction between the two, and by which the noble feelings of the latter shall be kept down, and their spirits broken. We are to see them again subject to individual persecution, as anger or malice, or any bad passion may suggest. Hence the whip; the chain; the iron-collar. Hence the various modes of private torture, of which so many accounts have been truly given. Nor can such horrible cruelties be discovered so as to be made punishable, while the testimony of any number of the oppressed is invalid against the oppressors, however they may be offences against the laws. And, lastly, we are to see their innocent offspring, again whose personal liberty the shadow of an argument cannot be advanced, inheriting all the miseries of their parents' lot.

The evil then, as far as it has been hitherto viewed, presents to us in its three several departments, a measure of human suffering not to be equalled; not to be calculated; not to be described. But would that we could consider this part of the subject as dismissed! Would that in each of the departments now examined, there was no counterpai

left us to contemplate ! but this cannot be. For if there be persons, who suffer unjustly, there must be others, who oppress. And if there be those who oppress, there must be to the suffering, which has been occasioned, a corresponding portion of immorality or guilt.

We are obliged then to view the counterpart of the evil in question, before we can make a proper estimate of the nature of it. And, in examining this part of it, we shall find that we have a no less frightful picture to behold than in the former cases ; or that, while the miseries endured by the unfortunate Africans excite our pity on the one hand, the vices, which are connected with them, provoke our indignation and abhorrence on the other. The Slave-trade, in this point of view, must strike us as an immense mass of evil on account of the criminality attached to it, as displayed in the various branches of it, which have already been examined. For, to take the counterpart of the evil in the first of these, can we say, that no moral turpitude is to be placed to the account of those, who living on the continent of Africa, give birth to the enormities, which take place in consequence of the prosecution of this trade ? Is not that man made morally worse, who is induced to become a tyger to his species, or who, instigated by avarice, lies in wait in the thicket to get possession of his fellow-man ? Is no injustice manifest in the land, where the prince, unfaithful to his duty, seizes his innocent subjects, and sells them for slaves ? Are no moral evils produced among those communities, which make war upon other communities for the sake of plunder, and without any previous provocation or offence ? Does no crime attach to those, who accuse others falsely, or who multiply and divide crimes for the sake of the profit of the punishment, and who for the same reason continue the

use of barbarous and absurd ordeals as a test of innocence or guilt ?

In the second of these branches, the counterpart of the evil is to be seen in the conduct of those, who purchase the miserable natives in their own country, and convey them to distant lands. And here questions, similar to the former, may be asked. Do they experience no corruption of their nature, or become chargeable with no violation of right, who, when they go with their ships to this continent, know the enormities which their visits there will occasion, who buy their fellow-creature, man, and this, knowing the way in which he comes into their hands, and who chain, and imprison, and scourge him ? Do the moral feelings of those persons escape without injury, whose hearts are hardened ? And can the hearts of those be otherwise than hardened, who are familiar with the tears and groans of innocent strangers forcibly torn away from every thing that is dear to them in life, who are accustomed to see them on board their vessels, in a state of suffocation, and in the agonies of despair, and who are themselves in the habits of the cruel use of arbitrary power ?

The counterpart of the evil in its third branch, is to be seen in the conduct of those, who, when these miserable people have been landed, purchase and carry them to their respective homes. And let us see whether a mass of wickedness is not generated also in the present case. Can those have nothing to answer for, who separate the faithful ties which nature and religion have created ? Can their feelings be otherwise than corrupted, who consider their fellow-creatures as brutes, or treat those as cattle, who may become the temples of the Holy Spirit, and in whom the Divinity dis-

dains not himself to dwell? Is there no injustice in forcing men to labour without wages? Is there no breach of duty, when we are commanded to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and visit the sick and in prison, in exposing them to want, in torturing them by cruel punishment, and in grinding them down by hard labour, so as to shorten their days? Is there no crime in adopting a system, which keeps down all the noble faculties of their souls, and which positively debases and corrupts their nature? Is there no crime in perpetuating these evils among their innocent offspring? And finally, besides all these crimes, is there not naturally in the familiar sight of the exercise, but more especially in the exercise itself, of uncontrolled power, that which vitiates the internal man? In seeing misery stalk daily over the land, do not all become insensibly hardened? By giving birth to that misery themselves, do they not become abandoned? In what state of society are the corrupt appetites so easily, so quickly, and so frequently indulged, and where else, by means of frequent indulgence, do these experience such a monstrous growth? Where else is the temper subject to such frequent irritation, or passion to such little control? Yes: if the unhappy slave is in an unfortunate situation, so is the tyrant who holds him. Action and reaction are equal to each other, as well in the moral as in the natural world. You cannot exercise an improper dominion over a fellow-creature, but by a wise ordering of Providence, you must necessarily injure yourself.

Having now considered the nature of the evil of the Slave trade, in its three separate departments of suffering, and in corresponding counterparts of guilt, I shall make a few observations on the extent of it.

On this subject it must strike us, that the misery and the

crimes included in the evil, as it has been found in Africa, were not like common maladies, which make a short or periodical visit and then are gone, but that they were continued daily. Nor were they like diseases, which from local causes, attack a village or a town, and by the skill of the physician, under the blessing of Providence, are removed, but they affected a whole continent. The trade, with all its horrors, began at the river Senegal, and continued, winding with the coast, through its several geographical divisions, to Cape Negro; a distance of more than three thousand miles. In various lines or paths formed at right angles from the shore, and passing into the heart of the country, slaves were procured and brought down. The distance, which many of them travelled, was immense. Those, who have been in Africa, have assured us, that they came as far as from the sources of their largest rivers, which we know to be many hundred miles in land, and the natives have told us, in their way of computation, that they came a journey of many moons.

It must strike us again, that the misery and the crimes, included in the evil, as it has been shown in the transportation, had no ordinary bounds. They were not to be seen in the crossing of a river, but of an ocean. They did not begin in the morning, and end at night, but were continued for many weeks, and sometimes by casualties for a quarter of the year. They were not limited to the precincts of a solitary ship, but were spread among many vessels; and there were so constantly passing, that the ocean itself never ceased to be a witness of their existence.

And it must strike us finally, that the misery and crimes, included in the evil as it has been found in foreign lands, were not confined within the shores of a little island. Most of the islands of a continent, and many of these of consider-

able population and extent, were filled with them. And the continent itself, to which these geographically belong, was widely polluted by their domain. Hence, if we were to take the vast extent of space occupied by these crimes and sufferings, from the heart of Africa to its shores, and that which they filled on the continent of America, and the islands adjacent, and were to join the crimes and sufferings in one to those in the other, by the crimes and sufferings which took place in the track of the vessels successively crossing the Atlantic, we should behold a vast belt as it were of physical and moral evil, reaching through land and ocean to the length of nearly half the circle of the globe.

And as the contemplation of the removal of this monstrous evil, should excite in us the most pleasing and grateful sensations, so the perusal of the history of it should afford us lessons, which it must be useful to us to know or to be reminded of. For it cannot be otherwise than useful to us to know the means which have been used, and the different persons who have moved, in so great a cause. It cannot be otherwise than useful to us to be impressively reminded of the simple axiom, which the perusal of this history will particularly suggest to us, that "the greatest works must have a beginning;" because the fostering of such an idea in our minds, cannot but encourage us to undertake the removal of evils, however vast they may appear in their size, or however difficult to overcome. It cannot again be otherwise than useful to us to be assured (and this history will assure us of it) that in any work, which is a work of righteousness, however small the beginning may be, or however small the progress may be, that we may make in it, we ought never to despair; for that, whatever checks and discouragements we may meet with, "no virtuous effort is ever ultimately lost." And finally, it cannot be oth-

erwise than useful to us to form the opinion, which the contemplation of this subject must always produce, namely, that many of the evils, which are still left among us, may, by an union of wise and virtuous individuals, be greatly alleviated, if not entirely done away; for if the great evil of the Slave-trade, so deeply entrenched by its hundred interests, has fallen prostrate before the efforts of those who attacked it, what evil of a less magnitude shall not be more easily subdued? O may reflections of this sort always enliven us, always encourage us, always stimulate us to our duty! May we never cease to believe, that many of the miseries of life are still to be remedied, or to rejoice that we may be permitted, if we will only make ourselves worthy by our endeavours, to heal them! May we encourage for this purpose every generous sympathy that arises in our hearts, as the offspring of the Divine influence for our good, convinced that we are not born for ourselves alone, and that the Divinity never so fully dwells in us, as when we do his will; and that we never do his will more agreeably, as far as it has been revealed to us, than when we employ our time in works of charity towards the rest of our fellow-creatures!

**HISTORY**  
OF THE  
**RISE, PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENT**  
OF THE  
**ABOLITION**  
OF THE  
**AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.**

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**CHAPTER I.**

*Forerunners and coadjutors in the cause.*

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**SECTION I.**

IT would be considered by many, who have stood at the mouth of a river, and witnessed its torrent there, to be both an interesting and a pleasing journey to go to the fountain-head, and then to travel on its banks downwards, and to mark the different streams in each side, which should run into it, and feed it. So I presume the reader will not be a little interested and entertained in viewing with me the course of the abolition of the Slave-trade, in first finding its source, and then in tracing the different springs which have contributed to its increase.

In tracing the different streams from whence the torrent arose, which has now happily swept away the Slave-trade,

I must begin with an enquiry as to those who favoured the cause of the injured Africans, from the year 1516, to the year 1787, at which latter period a number of persons associated themselves in England for its abolition. For though they, who belonged to this association, may, in consequence of having pursued a regular system, be called the principal actors, yet it must be acknowledged that their efforts would never have been so effectual, if the minds of men had not been prepared by others, who had moved before them. Great events have never taken place without previously disposing causes. So it is in the case before us. Persons have contributed towards it in different ways. Some have written expressly on the subject, who have had no opportunity of promoting it by personal exertions. Others have only mentioned it incidentally in their writings. Others, in an elevated rank and station, have cried out publicly concerning it, whose sayings have been recorded. All these, however, may be considered as necessary forerunners in their day. For all of them have brought the subject more or less into notice. They have more or less enlightened the mind upon it. They have more or less impressed it. And therefore each may be said to have had his share in diffusing and keeping up a certain portion of knowledge and feeling concerning it, which has been eminently useful in the promotion of the cause.

It is rather remarkable, that the first forerunners and co-adjutors, should have been men in power.

In 1517, the Emperor Charles Fifth, granted a patent to one of his Flemish favourites, containing an exclusive right of importing four thousand Africans into America. But he lived long enough to repent of what he had thus inconsiderately done. For in the year 1542, he made a code of laws for the better protection of the unfortunate Indians in

his foreign dominions ; and he stopped the progress of African slavery, by an order, that all slaves in his American islands should be made free. This order was executed by Pedro de la Gasca. Manumission took place as well in Hispaniola as on the continent. But on the return of Gasca to Spain, and the retirement of Charles into a monastery, slavery was revived.

It is impossible to pass over this instance of the abolition of slavery by Charles in all his foreign dominions, without some comments. It shows him, first, to have been a friend both to the Indians and the Africans, as a part of the human race. It shows he was ignorant of what he was doing, when he gave his sanction to this cruel trade. It shows when legislators give one set of men an undue power over another, how quickly they abuse it ; or he never would have found himself obliged in the short space of twenty-five years, to undo that which he had countenanced as a great state measure.

From the opinion of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, I hasten to that which was expressed much about the same time, in a public capacity, by Pope Leo the Tenth. The Dominicans in Spanish America, witnessing the cruel treatment which the slaves underwent there, considered slavery as utterly repugnant to the principles of the gospel, and recommended the abolition of it. The Franciscans did not favour the former in this their scheme of benevolence ; and the consequence was, that a controversy on this subject sprung up between them, which was carried to this Pope for his decision. Leo exerted himself, much to his honour, in behalf of the poor sufferers, and declared " That not only the christian religion, but that nature herself cried out against a state of slavery."

From Spain and Italy I come to England. 'The first importation of slaves from Africa by our countrymen, was, in the reign of Elizabeth, in the year 1562. This great princess seems on the very commencement of the trade, to have questioned its lawfulness. She seems to have entertained a religious scruple concerning it, and, indeed, to have revolted at the very thought of it. She seems to have been aware of the evils to which its continuance might lead, or that, if it were sanctioned, the most unjustifiable means might be made use of to procure the persons of the natives of Africa. And in what light she would have viewed any acts of this kind, had they taken place, we may conjecture from this fact; that when captain (afterwards Sir John) Hawkins returned from his first voyage to Africa and Hispaniola, whither he had carried slaves, she sent for him; and, as we learn from Hill's Naval History, expressed her concern lest any of the Africans should be carried off without their free consent, declaring that "It would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of Heaven upon the undertakers." Captain Hawkins promised to comply with the injunctions of Elizabeth in this respect. But he did not keep his word for when he went to Africa again, he seized many of the inhabitants, and carried them off as slaves, which occasioned Hill, in the account he gives of his second voyage, to use these remarkable words: "Here began the horrid practice of forcing the Africans into slavery, an injustice and barbarity which, so sure as there is vengeance in heaven for the worst of crimes, will sometime be the destruction of all who allow or encourage it." That the trade should have been suffered to continue under such a princess, and after such solemn expressions as those which she has been described to have uttered, can be only attributed to the pains taken by those concerned in it to keep her ignorant of the truth.

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From England I now pass over to France. Labat, a Roman missionary, in his account of the isles of America, mentions, that Louis the Thirteenth was very uneasy when he was about to issue the edict, by which all Africans coming into his colonies were to be made slaves; and that this uneasiness continued, till he was assured, that the introduction of them in this capacity into his foreign dominions, was the readiest way of converting them to the principles of the christian religion.

These, then, were the first forerunners in the great cause of the abolition of the Slave-trade. Nor have their services towards it been of small moment. For, in the first place, they have enabled those, who came after them, and who took an active interest in the same cause, to state the great authority of their opinions and of their example. They have enabled them, again, to detail the history connected with these, in consequence of which, circumstances have been laid open, which it is of great importance to know. For have they not enabled them to state, that the African Slave-trade never would have been permitted to exist, but for the ignorance of those in authority concerning it; that at its commencement there was a revolting of nature against it; a suspicion; a caution; a fear; both as to its unlawfulness and its effects? Have they not enabled them to state, that falsehoods were advanced, and these concealed under the mask of religion, to deceive those who had the power to suppress it? Have they not enabled them to state, that this trade began in piracy, and that it was continued upon the principles of force? And, finally, have not they, who have been enabled to make these statements, knowing all the circumstances connected with them, found their own zeal increased, and their own courage and perseverance strengthened; and have they not, by the communi-

cation of them to others, produced many friends and even boursers in the cause ?

## SECTION II.

I have hitherto traced the history of the forerunners in this great cause, only up to about the year 1640. If I am pursue my plan, I am to trace it to the year 1787. But in order to show what I intend in a clearer point of view I shall divide those who have lived within this period, and who will now consist of persons in a less elevated station into four classes : and I shall give to each class a distinct consideration by itself.

Of those who compose the first class, I cannot name a single individual who took a part in this cause, till between the years 1670 and 1680. The first, whom I shall mention is Morgan Godwyn, a clergyman of the established church. This pious divine, wrote a treatise upon the subject, which he dedicated to the then Archbishop of Canterbury. He gave it to the world, at the time mentioned, under the title of "The Negroe's and Indian's Advocate." In this treatise he lays open the situation of these oppressed people, whose sufferings he had been an eye-witness in the island Barbadoes. He calls forth the pity of the reader in an affecting manner, and exposes with a nervous eloquence, the brutal sentiments and conduct of their oppressors. It seems to have been the first work undertaken in England expressly in favour of the cause.

The next person, whom I shall mention, is Richard Baxter, the celebrated divine among the Nonconformists. His Christian Directory, published about the same time as the Negroe's and Indian's Advocate, he gives advice to those masters in foreign plantations, who have Negroes and other slaves. In this he protests loudly against the

trade. He says expressly, that they who go out as pirates, and take away poor Africans, or people of another land, who never forfeited life or liberty, and make them slaves and sell them, are the worst of robbers, and ought to be considered as the common enemies of mankind; and that they who buy them, and use them as mere beasts for their own convenience, regardless of their spiritual welfare, are fitter to be called demons than christians. He then proposes several queries, which he answers in a clear and forcible manner, showing the great inconsistency of this traffic, and the necessity of treating those then in bondage with tenderness and a due regard to their spiritual concerns.

In the year 1696, Southern brought forward his celebrated tragedy of *Oronooko*, by means of which many became enlightened upon the subject, and interested in it. For this tragedy was not a representation of fictitious circumstances, but of such as had occurred in the colonies, and as had been communicated in a publication by Mrs. Behn.

The person, who seems to have noticed the subject next was Dr. Primatt. In his "*Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy, and on the Sin of Cruelty to Brute-animals*," he takes occasion to advert to the subject of the African Slave-trade. "It has pleased God," says he, "to cover some men with white skins, and others with black; but as there is neither merit nor demerit in complexion, the white man, notwithstanding the barbarity of custom and prejudice, can have no right by virtue of his colour to enslave and tyrannize over the black man. For whether a man be white or black, such he is by God's appointment, and, abstractedly considered, is neither a subject for pride, nor an object of contempt."

Hutcheson, in his *System of Moral Philosophy*, endeavours to show that he, who detains another by force in slave-

ry, can make no good title to him, and adds, "Strange that in any nation where a sense of liberty prevails, and where the Christian religion is professed, custom and high prospect of gain can so stupify the consciences of men, and all sense of natural justice, that they can hear such computations made about the value of their fellow-men, and their liberty, without abhorrence and indignation!"

Foster, in his *Discourses on Natural Religion and Social Virtue*, calls the slavery under our consideration, "a criminal and outrageous violation of the natural rights of mankind." I am sorry that I have not room to say all that he says, on this subject. Perhaps the following beautiful extracts may suffice :

"But notwithstanding this, we ourselves, who profess to be Christians, and boast of the peculiar advantages we enjoy by means of an express revelation of our duty from heaven, are in effect, these very untaught and rude heathen countries. With all our superior light, we instil into those whom we call savage and barbarous, the most despicable opinion of human nature. We, to the utmost of our power weaken and dissolve the universal tie, that binds and unites mankind. We practise what we should exclaim against, and the utmost excess of cruelty and tyranny, if nations of the world, differing in colour and form of government from ourselves, were so possessed of empire, as to be able to reduce us to a state of unmerited and brutish servitude. Of consequence, we sacrifice our reason, our humanity, our christianity, to an unnatural sordid gain. We teach other nations to despise and trample under foot all the obligations of social virtue. We take the most effectual method to prevent the propagation of the gospel, by representing it as a scheme of power and barbarous oppression, and an enemy to the natural privileges and rights of man."

In the year 1735, Atkins, who was a surgeon in the navy, published his voyage to Guinea, Brazil, and the West-Indies, in his majesty's ships *Swallow* and *Weymouth*. In this work, he describes openly the manner of making the natives slaves, such as by kidnapping, by unjust accusations and trials, and by other nefarious means. He states also, the cruelties practised upon them by the white people, and the iniquitous ways and dealings of the latter, and answers their argument, by which they insinuated that the condition of the Africans was improved by their transportation to other countries.

From this time, the trade beginning to be better known, a multitude of persons of various stations and characters, sprung up, who, by exposing it, are to be mentioned among the forerunners and coadjutors in the cause.

Wallis, in his *System of the Laws of Scotland*, maintains, that "neither men nor governments, have a right to sell those of their own species. Men and their liberty are neither purchaseable nor saleable." And after arguing the case, he says, "This is the law of nature, which is obligatory on all men, at all times, and in all places. Would not any of us, who should be snatched by pirates from his native land, think himself cruelly abused, and at all times entitled to be free? Have not these unfortunate Africans, who meet with the same cruel fate, the same right? Are they not men as well as we? And have they not the same sensibility? Let us not therefore, defend or support an usage, which is contrary to all the laws of humanity."

An anonymous author of a pamphlet, entitled, *An Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America*, seems to have come forward next. Speaking of slavery there, he says, "It is shocking to humanity, violative of every generous sentiment, abhorrent utterly from the Chris-

tian religion ; there cannot be a more dangerous maxim than that necessity is a plea for injustice, for who shall fix the degree of this necessity ? What villain so atrocious, who may not urge this excuse, or, as Milton has happily expressed it,

“and with necessity,

The tyrant's plea, excuse his dev'lish deed ?”

“That our colonies,” he continues, “want people, is a very weak argument for so inhuman a violation of justice. Shall a civilized, a Christian nation, encourage slavery, because the barbarous, savage, lawless African hath done it ? To what end do we profess a religion whose dictates we so flagrantly violate ? Wherefore, have we that pattern of goodness and humanity, if we refuse to follow it ? How long shall we continue a practice which policy rejects, justice condemns, and piety revolts at ?”

Bishop Warburton preached a sermon in the year 1766, before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in which he took up the cause of the miserable Africans, and in which he severely reprobated their oppressors. The language in this sermon is so striking, that I shall make an extract from it. “From the free savages,” says he, “I now come to the savages in bonds. By these I mean the vast multitudes yearly stolen from the opposite continent, and sacrificed by the colonists to their great idol, the god of gain. But what then, say these sincere worshippers of mammon ? They are our own property which we offer up. Gracious God ! to talk, as of herds of cattle, of property in rational creatures, creatures endued with all our faculties, possessing all our qualities, but that of colour, our brethren both by nature and grace, shocks all the feelings of humanity, and the dictates of common sense.

“In excuse of this violation it hath been pretended, that though indeed these miserable out-casts of humanity be torn

from their homes and native country, by fraud and violence, yet they thereby become the happier, and their condition the more eligible. But who are you, who pretend to judge of another man's happiness ; that state, which each man under the guidance of his Maker forms for himself, and not one man for another ? To know what constitutes mine or your happiness, is the sole prerogative of him who created us, and cast us in so various and different moulds.

About this time certain cruel and wicked practices, which must now be mentioned, had arrived at such a height, and had become so frequent in the metropolis, as to produce of themselves, other coadjutors to the cause.

Before the year 1700, planters, merchants, and others, resident in the West-Indies, but coming to England, were accustomed to bring with them certain slaves to act as servants with them, during their stay. The latter, seeing the freedom and the happiness of servants in this country, and considering what would be their own hard fate on their return to the islands, frequently absconded. Their masters of course made search after them, and often had them seized and carried away by force. It was, however, thrown out by many on these occasions, that the English laws did not sanction such proceedings, for that all persons who were baptized, became free. The consequence of this was, that most of the slaves, who came over with their masters, prevailed upon some pious clergyman to baptize them. They took of course godfathers of such citizens as had the generosity to espouse their cause. When they were seized they usually sent to these, if they had an opportunity, for their protection. And in the result, their godfathers, maintaining that they had been baptized, and that they were free on this account, as well as by the general tenour of the

laws of England, dared those, who had taken possession of them, to send them out of the kingdom.

The planters, merchants, and others, being thus circumstanced, knew not what to do. They were afraid of taking their slaves away by force, and they were equally afraid of bringing any of the cases before a public court. In this dilemma, in 1729, they applied to York and Talbot, the attorney and solicitor-general for the time being, and obtained the following strange opinion from them : " We are of opinion, that a slave by coming from the West-Indies into Great Britain or Ireland, either with or without his master, does not become free, and that his master's right and property in him, is not thereby determined or varied, and that baptism doth not bestow freedom on him, nor make any alteration in his temporal condition in these kingdoms. We are also of opinion, that the master may legally compel him to return again to the plantations."

This cruel and illegal opinion was delivered in the year 1729. The planters, merchants, and others, gave it of course all the publicity in their power. And the consequences were as might easily have been apprehended. In a little time, slaves absconding, were advertised in the London papers as runaways, and rewards offered for the apprehension of them, in the same brutal manner as we find them advertised in the land of slavery. They were advertised also, in the same papers, to be sold by auction, sometimes by themselves, and at others with horses, chaises, and harness. They were seized also by their masters, or by persons employed by them, in the very streets, and dragged from thence to the ships ; and so unprotected now, were these poor slaves, that persons in no wise concerned with them, began to institute a trade in their persons, making agreements with captains of ships going to the West-Indies

to put them on board at a certain price. This last instance shows how far human nature is capable of going, and is an answer to those persons, who have denied that kidnapping in Africa, was a source of supplying the Slave-trade. It shows, as all history does, from the time of Joseph, that, where there is a market for the persons of human beings, all kinds of enormities will be practised to obtain them.

These circumstances then, as I observed before, did not fail of producing new coadjutors in the cause. And first, they produced that able and indefatigable advocate, Mr. Granville Sharp. This gentleman is to be distinguished from those who preceded him, by this particular, that, whereas these were only writers, he was both a writer and an actor in the cause. In fact, he was the first labourer in it in England. By the words "actor" and "labourer," I mean, that he determined upon a plan of action in behalf of the oppressed Africans, to the accomplishment of which, he devoted a considerable portion of his time, talents, and substance. What Mr. Sharp has done to merit the title of coadjutor in this high sense, I shall now explain. The following is a short history of the beginning and of the course of his labours.

In the year 1765, Mr. David Lisle had brought over from Barbadoes, Jonathan Strong, an African slave, as his servant. He used the latter in a barbarous manner at his lodgings in Wapping, but particularly by beating him over the head with a pistol, which occasioned his head to swell. When the swelling went down, a disorder fell into his eyes, which threatened the loss of them. To this, an ague and fever succeeded, and a lameness in both his legs.

Jonathan Strong, having been brought into this deplorable situation, and being therefore, wholly useless, was left by his master to go whither he pleased. He applied ac-

Accordingly, to Mr. William Sharp, the surgeon, for his advice, as to one who gave up a portion of his time to the healing of the diseases of the poor. It was here that Mr. Granville Sharp, the brother of the former, saw him. Suffice it to say, that in process of time he was cured. During this time, Mr. Granville Sharp, pitying his hard case, supplied him with money, and he afterwards got him a situation in the family of Mr. Brown, an apothecary, to carry out medicines.

In this new situation, when Strong had become healthy and robust in his appearance, his master happened to see him. The latter immediately formed the design of possessing him again. Accordingly, when he had found out his residence, he procured John Ross, keeper of the Poultry-compter, and William Miller, an officer under the lord-mayor, to kidnap him. This was done by sending for him to a public house in Fenchurch-street, and then seizing him. By these he was conveyed, without any warrant, to the Poultry-compter, where he was sold by his master, to John Kerr, for thirty pounds.

Strong, in this situation, sent, as was usual, to his godfathers, John London and Stephen Nail, for their protection. They went, but were refused admittance to him. At length he sent for Mr. Granville Sharp. The latter went, but they still refused access to the prisoner. He insisted, however, upon seeing him, and charged the keeper of the prison at his peril, to deliver him up, till he had been carried before a magistrate.

Mr. Sharp, immediately upon this, waited upon Sir Robert Kite the then lord mayor, and entreated him to send for Strong, and to hear his case. A day was accordingly appointed. Mr. Sharp attended, and also, William M'Bean, a notary public, and David Laird, captain of the ship

Thames, which was to have conveyed Strong to Jamaica, in behalf of the purchaser, John Kerr. A long conversation ensued, in which the opinion of York and Talbot was quoted. Mr. Sharp made his observations. Certain lawyers, who were present, seemed to be staggered at the case, but inclined rather to recommit the prisoner. The lord mayor, however, discharged Strong, as he had been taken up without a warrant.

As soon as this determination was made known, the parties began to move off. Captain Laird, however, who kept close to Strong, laid hold of him before he had quitted the room, and said aloud, "Then I now seize him as my slave." Upon this, Mr. Sharp put his hand upon Laird's shoulder, and pronounced these words: "I charge you in the name of the king, with an assault upon the person of Jonathan Strong, and all these are my witnesses." Laird was greatly intimidated by this charge, made in the presence of the lord mayor and others, and fearing a prosecution, let his prisoner go, leaving him to be conveyed away by Mr. Sharp.

Mr. Sharp, having been greatly affected by this case, and foreseeing how much he might be engaged in others of a similar nature, thought it time that the law of the land should be known upon this subject. He applied therefore, to Doctor Blackstone, afterwards Judge Blackstone, for his opinion upon it. He was, however, not satisfied with it, when he received it; nor could he obtain any satisfactory answer from several other lawyers, to whom he afterwards applied. The truth is, that the opinion of York and Talbot, which had been made public, and acted upon, by the planters, merchants, and others, was considered of high authority, and scarcely any one dared to question the legality of it. In this situation, Mr. Sharp saw no means of help, but in his own industry, and he determined immediately to give

up two or three years to the study of the English law, that he might the better advocate the cause of these miserable people. The result of these studies was, the publication of a book in the year 1769, which he called, "A Representation of the Injustice and dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery in England." In this work he refuted, in the clearest manner, the opinion of York and Talbot. He produced against it the opinion of the Lord Chief Justice Holt, who many years before had determined, that every slave coming into England became free. He attacked and refuted it again, by a learned and laborious inquiry into all the principles of Villanage. He refuted it again, by showing it to be an axiom in the British constitution, "That every man in England, was free to sue for and defend his rights, and that force could not be used without a legal process," leaving it to the judges to determine, whether an African was a man. He attacked also, the opinion of Judge Blackstone, and showed where his error lay. This valuable book containing these and other kinds of arguments on the subject, he distributed, but particularly among the lawyers, giving them an opportunity of refuting or acknowledging the doctrines it contained.

After this, one or two trials came on, in which the oppressor was defeated, and several cases occurred, in which poor slaves were liberated from the holds of vessels, and other places of confinement, by the exertions of Mr. Sharp.

But though the injured Africans, whose causes had been tried, escaped slavery, and though many, who had been forcibly carried into dungeons, ready to be transported into the Colonies, had been delivered out of them, Mr. Sharp was not easy in his mind. Not one of the cases had yet been pleaded on the broad ground, "Whether an African slave coming into England, became free?" This great ques-

tion had been hitherto studiously avoided. It was still, therefore, left in doubt. Mr. Sharp was almost daily acting as if it had been determined, as if he had been following the known law of the land. He wished, therefore, that the next cause might be argued upon this principle. Lord Mansfield too, who had been biassed by the opinion of York and Talbot, began to waver, in consequence of the different pleadings he had heard on this subject. He saw also, no end of trials like these, till the law should be ascertained, and he was anxious for a decision on the same basis as Mr. Sharp. In this situation, the following case offered, which was agreed upon for the determination of this important question.

James Somerset, an African slave, had been brought to England by his master Charles Stewart, in November, 1769. Somerset, in process of time, left him. Stewart took an opportunity of seizing him, and had him conveyed on board the *Ann and Mary*, captain Knowles, to be carried out of the kingdom, and sold as a slave in Jamaica. The question was "Whether a slave, by coming into England, became free?"

In order that time might be given for ascertaining the law fully on this head, the case was argued at three different sittings. First, in January, 1772; secondly, in February, 1772; and thirdly, in May, 1772. And that no decision otherwise than what the law warranted, might be given, the opinion of the Judges was taken upon the pleadings. The great and glorious result of the trial, was, that as soon as ever any slave set his foot upon English territory, he became free.

Thus ended the great case of Somerset, which, having been determined after so deliberate an investigation of the law, can never be reversed while the British Constitution

remains. The eloquence displayed in it by those who were engaged on the side of liberty, was perhaps never exceeded on any occasion ; and the names of the counsellors, Davy, Glynn, Hargrave, Mansfield, and Alleyne, ought always to be remembered with gratitude by the friends of this great cause. For when we consider in how many crowded courts they pleaded, and the number of individuals in these, whose minds they enlightened, and whose hearts they interested in the subject, they are certainly to be put down as no small instruments in the promotion of it : but chiefly to him, under Divine Providence, are we to give the praise, who became the first great actor in it, who devoted his time, his talents, and his substance, to this Christian undertaking, and by whose laborious researches, the very pleaders themselves were instructed and benefited. By means of his almost incessant vigilance and attention, and unwearied efforts, the poor African ceased to be hunted in our streets as a beast of prey. Miserable as the roof might be, under which he slept, he slept in security. He walked by the side of the stately ship, and he feared no dungeon in her hold. Nor ought we, as Englishmen, to be less grateful to this distinguished individual, than the African ought to be upon this occasion. To him we owe it, that we no longer see our public papers polluted by hateful advertisements, of the sale of the human species, or that we are no longer distressed by the perusal of impious rewards for bringing back the poor and the helpless into slavery, or that we are prohibited the disgusting spectacle of seeing man bought by his fellow-man.

Mr. Sharp felt it his duty, immediately after this trial, to write to Lord North, then principal minister of state, warning him, in the most earnest manner, to abolish immediately both the trade and the slavery of the human species in all the British dominions, as utterly irreconcilable with

the principles of the British constitution, and the established religion of the land.

In the year 1774, John Wesley, the celebrated divine, to whose pious labours the religious world will be long indebted, undertook the cause of the poor Africans. He had been in America, and had seen and pitied their hard condition. The work which he gave to the world in consequence, was entitled, *Thoughts on Slavery*. Mr. Wesley had this great cause much at heart, and frequently recommended it to the support of those who attended his useful ministry.

In the year 1783, we find Mr. Sharp coming again into notice. We find him at this time taking a part in a cause, the knowledge of which, in proportion as it was disseminated, produced an earnest desire among all disinterested persons for the abolition of the slave-trade.

In this year, certain underwriters desired to be heard against Gregson and others, of Liverpool, in the case of the ship *Zong*, captain Collingwood, alledging, that the captain and officers of the said vessel, threw overboard one hundred and thirty-two slaves alive, into the sea, in order to defraud them, by claiming the value of the said slaves, as if they had been lost in a natural way. In the course of the trial, which afterwards came on, it appeared, that the slaves on board the *Zong*, were very sickly; that sixty of them had already died; and several were ill and likely to die; when the captain proposed to James Kelsall, the mate, and others, to throw several of them overboard, stating "that if they died a natural death, the loss would fall upon the owners of the ship, but that, if they were thrown into the sea, it would fall upon the underwriters." He selected accordingly, one hundred and thirty-two of the most sickly of the slaves. Fifty-four of these were immediately thrown overboard, and forty-two were made to be partakers of their

fate on the succeeding day. In the course of three days afterwards, the remaining twenty-six were brought upon deck to complete the number of victims. The first sixteen submitted to be thrown into the sea ; but the rest with a noble resolution would not suffer the officers to touch them, but leaped after their companions, and shared their fate.

The plea which was set up in behalf of this atrocious and unparalleled act of wickedness, was, that the captain discovered, when he made the proposal, that he had only two hundred gallons of water on board, and that he had missed his port. It was proved, however, in answer to this, that no one had been put upon short allowance ; and that, as if Providence had determined to afford an unequivocal proof of the guilt, a shower of rain fell and continued for three days immediately after the second lot of slaves had been destroyed, by means of which, they might have filled many of their vessels \* with water, and thus have prevented all necessity for the destruction of the third.

Mr Sharp was present at this trial, and procured the attendance of a short-hand writer to take down the facts, which should come out in the course of it. These he gave to the public afterwards. He communicated them also, with a copy of the trial, to the Lords of the Admiralty, as the guardians of justice upon the seas, and to the Duke of Portland, as principal minister of state. No notice, however, was taken by any of these, of the information which had been thus sent them.

But though nothing was done by the persons then in power, in consequence of the murder of so many innocent indi-

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\* It appeared that they filled six.

iduals, yet the publication of an account of it by Mr. Sharp in the newspapers, made such an impression upon others, that new coadjutors rose up. For, soon after this, we find Thomas Day entering the lists as the champion of the injured Africans. In 1776, he had written a letter to a friend in America, who was the possessor of slaves, to dissuade him, by a number of arguments, from holding such property. And now, when the knowledge of the case of the ship *Zong* was spreading, he published that letter, under the title of "Fragment of an Original Letter on the Slavery of the Negroes."

In this same year, Dr. Porteus, bishop of Chester, but now bishop of London, came forward as a new advocate for the natives of Africa. The way in which he rendered them service, was by preaching a sermon in their behalf, before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Of the wide circulation of this sermon, I shall say something in another place, but much more of the enlightened and pious author of it, who from this time never failed to aid, at every opportunity, the cause which he had so ably undertaken.

In the year 1784, James Ramsay, vicar of Teston in Kent, became also an able, zealous, and indefatigable patron of the African cause. This gentleman had resided nineteen years in the island of St. Christopher, where he had observed the treatment of the slaves, and had studied the laws relating to them. On his return to England, yielding to his own feelings of duty, and the solicitations of some amiable friends, he published a work which he called, "An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of the African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies." After having given an account of the relative situation of master and slave in various parts of the world, he explained the low and degrading situation which the Africans held in society in our own islands. He

showed that their importance would be increased, and the temporal interest of their masters promoted, by giving them freedom, and by granting them other privileges.

The publication of this book by one, who professed to have been so long resident in the islands, and to have been an eye-witness of facts, produced, as may easily be supposed, a good deal of conversation, and made a considerable impression, but particularly at this time, when a storm was visibly gathering over the heads of the oppressors of the African race. These circumstances occasioned one or two persons to attempt to answer it, and these answers brought Mr. Ramsay into the first controversy ever entered into on this subject, during which, as is the case in most controversies, the cause of truth was spread.

In the year 1785, we find other coadjutors coming before our view, but these in a line different from that, in which any other belonging to this class had yet moved. Mr. George White, a clergyman of the established church, and Mr. John Chubb, suggested to Mr. William Tucket, the mayor of Bridgewater, where they resided, and to others of that town, the propriety of petitioning parliament for the abolition of the Slave-trade. This petition was agreed upon, and when drawn up, was in part as follows ;

“ The humble petition of the inhabitants of Bridgewater, sheweth,

“ That your petitioners, reflecting with the deepest sensibility on the deplorable condition of that part of the human species, the African Negroes, who by the most flagitious means are reduced to slavery and misery in the British colonies, beg leave to address this honourable house in their behalf, and to express a just abhorrence of a system of oppression, which no prospect of private gain, no consider-

ation of public advantage, no plea of political expediency, can sufficiently justify or excuse."

'This petition was presented by the members for the town of Bridgewater. It was ordered to lie on the table.

The last of the necessary forerunners and coadjutors of this class, whom I am to mention, was our much admired poet, Cowper : and a great coadjutor he was, when we consider what value was put upon his sentiments, and the extraordinary circulation of his works.

### SECTION III.

The second class of the forerunners and coadjutors in this great cause, up to May 1787, will consist of the Quakers in England.

The first of this class was, George Fox, the venerable founder of this benevolent society.

George Fox was cotemporary with Richard Baxter, being born not long after him, and dying much about the same time. Like him, he left his testimony against this wicked trade. When he was in the island of Barbadoes, in the year 1671, he delivered himself to those who attended his religious meetings in the following manner :

"Consider with yourselves," says he, "if you were in the same condition as the poor Africans are, who came strangers to you, and were sold to you as slaves ; I say, if this should be the condition of you or yours, you would think it a hard measure ; yea, and very great bondage and cruelty. And therefore consider seriously of this ; and do you for them, and to them, as you would willingly have them, or any others do unto you, were you in the like slavish condition, and bring them to know the Lord Christ." And in

reproachful to Christianity; and to disown them, if they desist not therefrom."

The yearly meeting of 1761, having thus agreed to exclude from membership such as should be found concerned in this trade, that of 1763, endeavoured to draw the cords still tighter, by attaching criminality to those, who should aid and abet the trade in any manner. By the minute, which was made on this occasion, I apprehend that no one belonging to the Society, could furnish even materials for such voyages. "We renew our exhortation, that Friends every where be especially careful to keep their hands clear of giving encouragement in any shape to the Slave-trade, it being evidently destructive of the natural rights of mankind, who are all ransomed by one Saviour, and visited by one divine light, in order to salvation: a traffic calculated to enrich and aggrandize some upon the misery of others, in its nature abhorrent to every just and tender sentiment, and contrary to the whole tenour of the Gospel."

Some pleasing intelligence having been sent on this subject, by the Society in America, to the Society in England, the yearly meeting of 1772, thought it their duty to notice it, and to keep their former resolutions alive, by the following minute: "It appears that the practice of holding Negroes in oppressive and unnatural bondage, hath been so successfully discouraged by Friends in some of the colonies, as to be considerably lessened. We cannot but approve of these salutary endeavours, and earnestly entreat they may be continued, that, through the favour of divine Providence, a traffic so unmerciful and unjust in its nature, to a part of our own species, made, equally with ourselves, for immortality, may come to be considered by all in its proper light, and be utterly abolished as a reproach to the Christian name."

From this time there appears to have been a growing desire in this benevolent society, to step out of its ordinary course in behalf of this injured people. It had hitherto confined itself to the keeping of its own members unpolluted by any gain from their oppression. But it was now ready to make an appeal to others, and to bear a more public testimony in their favour. Accordingly, in the month of June, 1788, when a bill had been brought into the House of Commons, for certain regulations to be made with respect to the African trade, the Society sent the following petition to that branch of the legislature :

“ Your petitioners, met in this their annual assembly, having solemnly considered the state of the enslaved Negroes, conceive themselves engaged, in religious duty, to lay the suffering situation of that unhappy people before you, as a subject loudly calling for the humane interposition of the legislature.

“ Your petitioners regret that a nation, professing the Christian faith, should so far counteract the principles of humanity and justice, as by the cruel treatment of this oppressed race, to fill their minds with prejudices against the mild and beneficent doctrines of the Gospel.

“ Under the countenance of the laws of this country, many thousands of these our fellow-creatures, entitled to the natural rights of mankind, are held as personal property in cruel bondage ; and your petitioners being informed, that a Bill for the regulation of the African Trade, is now before the House, containing a clause which restrains the officers of the African Company from exporting Negroes, your petitioners, deeply affected with a consideration of the rapine, oppression, and bloodshed, attending this traffic, humbly request that this restriction may be extended to all persons

whomsoever, or that the House would grant such other relief in the premises, as in its wisdom may seem meet."

This petition was presented by Sir Cecil Wray, who, on introducing it, spoke very respectfully of the Society. He declared his hearty approbation of their application, and said he hoped he should see the day when not a slave would remain within the dominions of this realm. Lord North seconded the motion, saying, "he could have no objection to the petition, and that its object ought to recommend it to every humane breast; that it did credit to the most benevolent society in the world; but that, the session being so far advanced, the subject could not then be taken into consideration; and he regretted that the slave-trade, against which the petition was so justly directed, was in a commercial view become necessary to almost every nation of Europe." The petition was then brought up and read, after which it was ordered to lie on the table. This was the first petition (being two years earlier than that from the inhabitants of Bridgewater,) which was ever presented to parliament for the abolition of the Slave-trade.

But the Society did not stop here; for having at the yearly meeting of 1783, particularly recommended the cause to a standing committee appointed to act at intervals, called the Meeting for Sufferings, the latter in this same year, resolved upon an address\* to the public, entitled, "The Case of our fellow-creatures, the oppressed Africans, respectfully recommended to the serious Consideration of the Legislature of Great Britain, by the People called Quakers;" in



\* Copies of this address were sent, first to the King, the Queen, and Prince of Wales; and afterwards to the principal officers of government, and to every member of Parliament.

which they endeavoured in the most pathetic manner, to make the reader acquainted with the cruel nature of this trade; and they ordered two thousand copies of it to be printed.

In the year 1785, the Society interested itself again in a similar manner. For the meeting for sufferings, as representing it, recommended to the quarterly meetings to distribute a work, written by Anthony Benezet, in America, called, "A Caution to Great Britain and her Colonies, in a short Representation of the calamitous State of the enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions." This book was accordingly forwarded to them for this purpose. On receiving it, they sent it among several public bodies, the regular and dissenting clergy, justices of the peace, and particularly among the great schools of the kingdom, that the rising youth might acquire a knowledge, and at the same time, a detestation, of this cruel traffic.

But I must now take my leave of the Quakers, as a public body,\* and go back to the year 1783, to record an event, which will be found of great importance in the present history, and in which only individuals belonging to the Society were concerned. This event seems to have arisen naturally out of existing or past circumstances. For the Society, as I have before stated, had sent a petition to Parliament in this year, praying for the abolition of the Slave-trade. It had also laid the foundation for a public distribution of the books as just mentioned, with a view of enlightening others on this great subject. The case of the ship *Zong*, which I have before had occasion to explain, had occurred this

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\* The Quakers, as a public body, kept the subject alive at their yearly meeting in 1784, 1785, 1787, &c.

Quakers engaged, without their usual consideration, in purchases of this kind, yet those constitutional principles, which belong to the Society, occasioned the members of it in general, to treat those whom they purchased with great tenderness, considering them, though of a different colour, as brethren, and as persons for whose spiritual welfare it became them to be concerned; so that slavery, except as to the power legally belonging to it, was in general little more than servitude in their hands.

Though the treatment, which the Quakers adopted towards those Africans who fell into their hands, was so highly commendable, it did not prevent individuals among them from becoming uneasy about holding them in slavery at all. Some of these bore their private testimony against it, from the beginning, as a wrong practice, and in process of time, brought it before the notice of their brethren as a religious body.

In the year 1696, the yearly meeting for Pennsylvania, took up the subject as a public concern, and the result was, advice to the members of it to guard against future importations of African slaves, and to be particularly attentive to the treatment of those, who were then in their possession.

In the year 1711, the same yearly meeting resumed the important subject, and confirmed and renewed the advice, which had been before given.

From this time it continued to keep the subject alive. In the year 1754, it issued the following pertinent letter to all the members within its jurisdiction.

“Dear Friends,

“It hath frequently been the concern of our yearly meeting, to testify their uneasiness and disunity with the impor-

tation and purchasing of Negroes, and other slaves, and to direct the overseers of the several meetings, to advise and deal with such as engage therein. And it hath likewise been the continual care of many weighty Friends, to press those, who bear our name, to guard, as much as possible, against being in any respect concerned in promoting the bondage of such unhappy people. Yet, as we have with sorrow to observe, that their number is of late increased among us, we have thought it proper to make our advice and judgment more public, that none may plead ignorance of our principles therein ; and also again earnestly to exhort all to avoid, in any manner, encouraging the practice, of making slaves of our fellow-creatures.

“ Now, dear Friends, if we continually bear in mind the royal law of doing to others as we would be done by, we should never think of bereaving our fellow-creatures of that valuable blessing, liberty ; nor endure to grow rich by their bondage. To live in ease and plenty, by the toil of those, whom violence and cruelty have put in our power, is neither consistent with Christianity nor common justice ; and, we have good reason to believe, draws down the displeasure of Heaven ; it being a melancholy but true reflection, that, where slave-keeping prevails, pure religion and sobriety decline, as it evidently tends to harden the heart, and render the soul less susceptible of that holy spirit of love, meekness, and charity, which is the peculiar characteristic of a true Christian,

“ And, dear Friends, you, who by inheritance have slaves born in your families, we beseech you to consider them as souls committed to your trust, whom the Lord will require at your hands, and who, as well as you, are made partakers of the Spirit of Grace, and called to be heirs of salvation. And let it be your constant care to watch over them for

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good, instructing them in the fear of God, and the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, that they may answer the end of their creation, and that God may be glorified and honoured by them as well as by us. And so train them up, that if you should come to behold their unhappy situation, in the same light, that many worthy men, who are at rest, have done, and many of your brethren now do, and should think it your duty to set them free, they may be the more capable of making proper use of their liberty.

“With the salutation of our love we are your friends and brethren.

“Signed, in behalf of the yearly meeting, by John Evans, John Smith, Thomas Carleton and others.”

This truly Christian letter, which was written in the year 1734, was designed, as we collect from the contents of it, to make the sentiments of the Society better known and attended to, on the subject of the Slave-trade. It contains, as we see, exhortations to all the members within the yearly meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, to desist from purchasing and importing slaves, and where they possessed them, to have a tender consideration of their condition.

In the year 1774, we find the same yearly meeting legislating again on the same subject. By a resolution of that year, all members concerned in importing, selling, purchasing, giving, or transferring Negro or other slaves, or otherwise acting in such manner as to continue them in slavery, beyond the term limited by law \* or custom, were directed to be excluded from membership, or disowned.



\* This alludes to the term of servitude for white persons in these provinces.

In the year 1776, the same yearly meeting carried the matter still further. It was then enacted, That the owners of slaves, who refused to execute proper instruments for giving them their freedom, were to be disowned likewise.

It is not necessary to proceed further on this subject. It may be sufficient to say, that from this time, the Minutes of the yearly meeting for Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, exhibit proofs of an almost incessant attention, year after year,\* to the means not only of wiping away the stain of slavery from their religious community, but of promoting the happiness of those restored to freedom, and of their posterity also. And as the yearly meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, set this bright example, so those of New-England, New-York, Maryland, Virginia, and of the Carolinas and Georgia, in process of time followed it.

But whilst the Quakers were making these exertions at their different yearly meetings in America, as a religious body, to get rid both of the commerce and slavery of their fellow-creatures, others in the same profession, were acting as individuals (that is, on their own grounds, and independently of any influence from their religious communion) in the same cause, whose labours it will now be proper, in a separate narrative, to detail.

The first person of this description in the Society, was William Burling, of Long-Island. He had conceived an abhorrence of slavery from early youth. In process of time, he began to bear his testimony against it, by representing the unlawfulness of it to those of his own Society,

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\* Thus in 1779, 1780, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6. The members also of this meeting petitioned their own legislature on this subject, both in 1783 and in 1786.

when assembled at one of their yearly meetings. This expression of his public testimony, he continued annually on the same occasion.

The next was Ralph Sandiford, a merchant in Philadelphia. This worthy person had many offers of pecuniary assistance, which would have advanced him in life, but he declined them all, because they came from persons, who had acquired their independence by the oppression of their slaves. He was very earnest in endeavouring to prevail upon his friends, both in and out of the Society, to liberate those whom they held in bondage. At length he determined upon a work called, "The Mystery of Iniquity, in a brief Examination of the Practice of the Times." This he published in the year 1729, and circulated it free of expense, wherever he believed it would be useful. The above work was excellent as a composition. The language of it was correct. The style manly and energetic. And it abounded with facts, sentiments, and quotations, which, while they showed the virtue and talents of the author, rendered it a valuable appeal in behalf of the African cause.

The next public advocate was, Benjamin Lay,\* who lived at the distance of about six miles from Philadelphia. Benjamin Lay was known, when in England, to the royal family of that day, into whose private presence he was admitted. On his return to America, he took an active part in behalf of the oppressed Africans. In the year 1737, he published a treatise on Slave-keeping. This he gave away.

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\* Benjamin Lay attended the meetings for worship, or associated himself with the religious society of the Quakers. His wife too was an approved minister of the Gospel in that Society. But I believe he was not long an acknowledged member of it himself.

among his neighbours and others, but more particularly among the rising youth, many of whom he visited in their respective schools. He applied also to several of the governors for interviews, with whom he held conferences on the subject. Benjamin Lay was a man of strong understanding, and of great integrity, but of warm and irritable feelings, and more particularly so, when he was called forth on any occasion in which the oppressed Africans were concerned. For he had lived in the island of Barbadoes, and he had witnessed there scenes of cruelty towards them, which had greatly disturbed his mind, and which unhinged it, as it were, whenever the subject of their sufferings was brought before him.

The person, who laboured next in the Society, in behalf of the oppressed Africans, was John Woolman.

John Woolman, was born at Northampton, in the county of Burlington, and province of Western New-Jersey, in the year 1720. In his very early youth, he attended, in an extraordinary manner, to the religious impressions which he perceived upon his mind, and began to have an earnest solicitude about treading in the right path. Accordingly, in the twenty-second year of his age, he had given such proof of the integrity of his life, and of his religious qualifications, that he became an acknowledged minister of the gospel in his own Society.\*

We find that a journey, which he took as a minister of the gospel in 1746, through the provinces of Maryland, Virginia, and North-Carolina, contributed to prepare him as an instrument for the advancement of this great cause.

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\* This short sketch of the labours of John Woolman, is made up from his Journal.

"Two things," said he, "were remarkable to me in this journey; First, in regard to my entertainment. When I ate, drank, and lodged free-cost, with people who lived in ease on the hard labour of their slaves, I felt uneasy; and, as my mind was inward to the Lord, I found, from place to place, this uneasiness return upon me at times through the whole visit. Where the masters bore a good share of the burthen, and lived frugally, so that their servants were well provided for, and their labour moderate, I felt more easy. But where they lived in a costly way, and laid heavy burdens on their slaves, my exercise was often great."

In the year 1767, he felt his mind so deeply interested on the same subject, that he resolved to travel over Maryland, Virginia, and North-Carolina, in order to try to convince persons, principally in his own Society, of the inconsistency of holding slaves. Having passed the Susquehanna, into Maryland, he began to experience great agitation of mind.

"As the people," says he, "in this and the southern provinces, live much on the labour of slaves, many of whom are used hardly, my concern was, that I might attend with singleness of heart to the voice of the true Shepherd, and be so supported, as to remain unmoved at the faces of men."

It appears that he conversed with persons occasionally, who were not of his own Society, with a view of answering their arguments, and of endeavouring to evince the wickedness and impolicy of slavery. In discoursing with these, however strenuous he might appear, he seems never to have departed from a calm, modest, and yet dignified and even friendly demeanour.

In 1767, he went on foot to the western shores of Maryland, on a religious visit. After having crossed the Susquehanna, his old feelings returned to him; for coming amongst people living in outward ease and greatness, chief-

ly on the labour of slaves, his heart was much affected, and he waited with humble resignation, to learn how he should further perform his duty to this injured people. The travelling on foot, though it was agreeable to the state of his mind, he describes to have been wearisome to his body. He felt himself weakly at times, in consequence of it, but yet continued to travel on. At one of the quarterly meetings of the Society, being in great sorrow and heaviness, and under deep exercise on account of the miseries of the poor Africans, he expressed himself freely to those present, who held them in bondage. He expatiated on the tenderness and loving kindness of the apostles, as manifested in labours, perils, and sufferings, towards the poor Gentiles, and contrasted their treatment of the Gentiles with it, whom he described in the persons of their slaves; and was much satisfied with the result of his discourse.

The next person belonging to the Society of the Quakers, who laboured in behalf of the oppressed Africans, was Anthony Benezet. He was born before, and he lived after, John Woolman; of course he was cotemporary with him. I place him after John Woolman, because he was not so much known as a labourer, till two or three years after the other had begun to move in the same cause.

Anthony Benezet was born at St. Quintin, in Picardy, of a respectable family, in the year 1713. His father was one of the many protestants, who, in consequence of the persecutions which followed the revocation of the edict of Nantz, sought an asylum in foreign countries. After a short stay in Holland, he settled, with his wife and children, in London, in 1715.

Anthony Benezet, having received from his father a liberal education, served an apprenticeship in an eminent mercantile house in London. In 1731, however, he removed

with his family to Philadelphia, where he joined in profession with the Quakers. His three brothers then engaged in trade, and made considerable pecuniary acquisitions in it. He himself might have partaken both of their concerns and of their prosperity; but he did not feel himself at liberty to embark in their undertakings. He considered the accumulation of wealth, as of no importance, when compared with the enjoyment of doing good; and he chose the humble situation of a schoolmaster, as according best with this notion, believing, that by endeavouring to train up youth in knowledge and virtue, he should become more extensively useful than in any other way to his fellow-creatures.

As the principle of benevolence, when duly cultivated, brings forth fresh shoots, and becomes enlarged, so we find this amiable person extending the sphere of his usefulness, by becoming an advocate for the oppressed African race. For this service he seems to have been peculiarly qualified.

One of the means which Anthony Benezet took to promote the cause in question, (and an effectual one it proved, as far as it went) was to give his scholars a due knowledge and proper impressions concerning it. Situated as they were likely to be, in after-life, in a country where slavery was a custom, he thus prepared many, and this annually, for the promotion of his plans.

'To enlighten others, and to give them a similar bias, he had recourse to different measures from time to time. In the almanacs published annually in Philadelphia, he procured articles to be inserted, which he believed would attract the notice of the reader, and make him pause, at least for a while, as to the licitness of the Slave-trade. He wrote, also, as he saw occasion, in the public papers of the day. From small things he proceeded to greater.

In the year 1762, when he had obtained a still greater

store of information, he published a work, which he entitled, "A short Account of that Part of Africa, inhabited by the Negroes." About the year 1767, he published, "An Historical Account of Guinea, its Situation, Produce, and the General Disposition of its Inhabitants; with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave-trade, its Nature, and Calamitous Effects." This pamphlet contained a clear and distinct developement of the subject, from the best authorities. It contained also, the sentiments of many enlightened men upon it; and became instrumental, beyond any other book ever before published, in disseminating a proper knowledge and detestation of this trade.

Anthony Benezet, may be considered as one of the most zealous, vigilant, and active advocates, which the cause of the oppressed Africans ever had. He seemed to have been born, and to have lived for the promotion of it, and therefore he never omitted any the least opportunity of serving it.

When he heard that Mr. Granville Sharp had obtained, in the year 1772, the noble verdict in the cause of Somerset, the slave, he opened a correspondence with him, which he kept up, that there might be an union of action between them for the future, as far as it could be effected, and that they might each give encouragement to the other to proceed.

Anthony Benezet, besides the care he bestowed upon forwarding the cause of the oppressed Africans, in different parts of the world, found time to promote the comfort, and improve the condition of those in the state in which he lived. Apprehending that much advantage would arise both to them and the public, from instructing them in common learning, he zealously promoted the establishment of a school for that purpose. Much of the two last years of his

life, he devoted to a personal attendance on this school, being earnestly desirous that they who came to it, might be better qualified for the enjoyment of that freedom, to which great numbers of them had been then restored. To this he sacrificed the superior emoluments of his former school, and his bodily ease also, although the weakness of his constitution seemed to demand indulgence. By his last will he directed, that, after the decease of his widow, his whole little fortune (the savings of the industry of fifty years) should, except a few very small legacies, be applied to the support of it. During his attendance upon it, he had the happiness to find, (and his situation enabled him to make the comparison) that Providence had been equally liberal to the Africans, in genius and talents, as to other people.

After a few days illness, this excellent man died at Philadelphia, in the spring of 1784. The interment of his remains, was attended by several thousands of all ranks, professions, and parties, who united in deploring their loss. The mournful procession, was closed by some hundreds of those poor Africans, who had been personally benefited by his labours, and whose behaviour on the occasion, showed the gratitude and affection they considered to be due to him, as their own private benefactor, as well as the benefactor of their whole race.


Such, then, were the labours of the Quakers, in America : of individuals, from 1718, to 1784, and of the body at large, from 1696, to 1787, in this great cause of humanity and religion. Nor were the effects produced from these, otherwise than corresponding with what might have been expected from such an union of exertion in such a cause : for both the evils, that is, the evil of buying and selling, and the evil of using slaves, ceased at length with the members of this benevolent Society.

Having given to the reader, the history of the third class of forerunners and coadjutors, as it consisted of the Quakers in America, I am now to continue it, as it consisted of an union of these, with others on the same continent, in the year 1774, in behalf of the African race. To do this, I shall begin with the causes which led to the production of this great event.

And in the first place, as example is more powerful than precept, we cannot suppose that the Quakers could have shown these noble instances of religious principle, without supposing also, that individuals of other religious denominations, would be morally instructed by them. They who lived in the neighbourhood where they took place, must have become acquainted with the motives which led to them. Certain it is, that the example of the Quakers, in leaving off all concern with the Slave-trade, and in liberating their slaves (scattered as they were over various parts of America) contributed to produce, in many of a different religious denomination from themselves, a more tender disposition than had been usual towards the African race.

But a similar disposition towards these oppressed people, was created in others, by means of other circumstances or causes. In the early part of the eighteenth century, Judge Sewell, of New-England, came forward as a zealous advocate for them. He addressed a memorial to the legislature, which he called, "The Selling of Joseph," and in which he pleaded their cause, both as a lawyer, and a Christian. This memorial produced an effect upon many, but particularly upon those of his own persuasion; and from this time, the Presbyterians appear to have encouraged a sympathy in their favour.

In the year 1739, the celebrated George Whitfield, became an instrument in turning the attention of many others



to their hard case, and of begetting in these a sympathy towards them. This laborious minister, having been deeply affected with what he had seen in the course of his religious travels in America, thought it his duty to address a letter from Georgia, to the inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. This letter was printed in the year above mentioned. The following is an extract from it:

“As I lately passed through your provinces, in my way hither, I was sensibly touched with a fellow-feeling for the miseries of the poor Negroes. They are scarcely permitted to pick up the crumbs which fall from their master’s table. Not to mention what numbers have been given up to the inhuman usage of cruel task-masters, who, by their unrelenting scourges, have ploughed their backs, and made long furrows, and at length brought them even unto death. When passing along, I have viewed your plantations cleared and cultivated, many spacious houses built, and the owners of them faring sumptuously every day, my blood has frequently almost run cold within me, to consider how many of your slaves had neither convenient food to eat, nor proper raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the comforts you enjoy, were solely owing to their indefatigable labours.”

The letter, from which this is an extract, produced a desirable effect upon many of those, who perused it, but particularly upon such as began to be seriously disposed in these times. And as George Whitfield continued a firm friend to the poor Africans, never losing an opportunity of serving them, he interested, in the course of his useful life, many thousands of his followers in their favour.

To this account, it may be added, that from the year 1762, ministers, who were in the connection of John Wesley, began to be settled in America, and that as these were friends

to the oppressed Africans also, so they contributed, in their turn,\* to promote a softness of feeling towards them, among those of their own persuasion.

In consequence, then, of these and other causes, a considerable number of persons of various religious denominations, had appeared at different times in America, besides the Quakers, who, though they had not distinguished themselves by resolutions and manumissions, as religious bodies, were yet highly friendly to the African cause.

But this friendly disposition, was greatly increased in the year 1773, by the literary labours of Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia. For in this year, at the instigation of Anthony Benezet, he took up the cause of the oppressed Africans, in a little work, which he entitled, “An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements, on the Slavery of the Negroes;” and soon afterwards in another, which was a vindication of the first, in answer to an acrimonious attack by a West-Indian planter. These publications contained many new observations. They were written in a polished style; and while they exhibited the erudition and talents, they showed the liberality and benevolence, of the author. Having had a considerable circulation, they spread conviction among many, and promoted the cause for which



\* It must not be forgotten, that the example of the Moravians, had its influence, also, in directing men to their duty towards these oppressed people: for though, when they visited this part of the world for their conversion, they never meddled with the political state of things, by recommending it to masters to alter the condition of their slaves, as believing religion could give comfort in the most abject situations in life, yet they uniformly freed those slaves, who came into their own possession.

they had been so laudably undertaken. Of the great increase of friendly disposition towards the African cause, in this very year, we have this remarkable proof; that when the Quakers, living in East and West Jersey, wished to petition the legislature to obtain an act of assembly, for the more equitable manumission of slaves in that province, so many others of different persuasions joined them, that the petition was signed by upwards of three thousand persons.

But in the next year, or in the year 1774, the increased good-will towards the Africans, became so apparent, but more particularly in Pennsylvania, where the Quakers were more numerous than in any other state, that they, who considered themselves more immediately as the friends of these injured people, thought it right to avail themselves of it: and accordingly James Pemberton, one of the most conspicuous of the Quakers in Pennsylvania, and Dr. Rush, one of the most conspicuous of those belonging to the various other religious communities in that province, undertook, in conjunction with others, the important task of bringing those into a society, who were friendly to this cause. In this undertaking they succeeded. And hence arose that union of the Quakers with others, to which I have been directing the attention of the reader, and by which the third class of fore-runners and coadjutors becomes now complete. This society, which was confined to Pennsylvania, was the first ever formed in America, in which there was an union of persons of different religious denominations, in behalf of the African race.

The society of Pennsylvania, the object of which was "for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of free Negroes, unlawfully held in bondage," became so popular, that in the year 1787, it was thought desirable to enlarge it. Accordingly, several new members were admitted

into it. The celebrated Dr. Franklin, who had long warmly espoused the cause of the injured Africans, was appointed president ; James Pemberton and Jonathan Penrose, were appointed vice-presidents ; Dr. Benjamin Rush and Tench Coxe, secretaries.

I shall now only observe further upon this subject, that as a society, consisting of an union of the Quakers, with others of other religious denominations, was established for Pennsylvania, in behalf of the oppressed Africans, so different societies, consisting each of a similar union of persons, were established in New-York, Connecticut, New-Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and other states, for the same object, and that these afterwards held a correspondence, and personal communion with each other, for the promotion of it.

#### SECTION V.

I proceed now to the fourth class of forerunners and coadjutors, up to the year 1787, in the great cause of the abolition of the Slave-trade.

The first of these was Dr. Peckard. This gentleman had distinguished himself in the earlier part of his life, by certain publications on the intermediate state of the soul, and by others in favour of civil and religious liberty. To the latter cause he was a warm friend, seldom omitting any opportunity of declaring his sentiments in its favour. In the course of his preferment, he was appointed by Sir John Griffin, afterwards Lord Howard, of Walden, to the Mastership of Magdalen College, in the University of Cambridge. In this high office, he considered it to be his duty to support those doctrines which he had espoused, when in an inferior station ; and accordingly, when in the year 1784, it devolved upon him to preach a sermon before the Univer-

sity at Cambridge, he chose his favourite subject, in the handling of which he took an opportunity of speaking of the Slave-trade in the following nervous manner :

“ Now, whether we consider the crime, with respect to the individuals concerned in this most barbarous and cruel traffic, or whether we consider it as patronized and encouraged by the laws of the land, it presents to our view, an equal degree of enormity. A crime, founded on a dreadful pre-eminence in wickedness : a crime which, being both of individuals and the nation, must some time draw down upon us the heaviest judgment of Almighty God, who made of one blood all the sons of men, and who gave to all equally a natural right to liberty ; and who, ruling all the kingdoms of the earth, with equal providential justice, cannot suffer such deliberate, such monstrous iniquity, to pass long unpunished.”

But Dr. Peckard did not consider this delivery of his testimony, though it was given before a learned and religious body, as a sufficient discharge of his duty, while any opportunity remained of renewing it with effect. And, as such an one offered in the year 1785, when he was vice-chancellor of the University, he embraced it. In consequence of his office, it devolved upon him to give out two subjects for Latin dissertations, one to the middle bachelors, and the other to the senior bachelors of arts. They who produced the best, were to obtain the prizes. To the latter he proposed the following : “ *Anne liceat Invitos in Servitutem dare ?*” or, “ Is it right to make slaves of others, against their will ?”

This circumstance of giving out the subjects for the prizes, though only an ordinary measure, became the occasion of my own labours, or of the real honour, which I feel in

being able to consider myself as the next coadjutor of this class, in the cause of the injured Africans. For it happened in this year, that, being of the order of senior bachelors, I became qualified to write. I had gained a prize for the best Latin dissertation in the former year, and, therefore, it was expected that I should obtain one in the present, or I should be considered as having lost my reputation, both in the eyes of the University, and of my own College. It had happened also, that I had been honoured with the first of the prizes\* in that year, and therefore it was expected again, that I should obtain the first on this occasion. The acquisition of the second, however honourable, would have been considered as a falling off, or as a loss of former fame. I felt myself, therefore, particularly called upon to maintain my post. And with feelings of this kind, I began to prepare myself for the question.

In studying the thesis, I conceived it to point directly to the African Slave-trade, and more particularly, as I knew that Dr. Peckard, in the sermon which I have mentioned, had pronounced so warmly against it. At any rate, I determined to give it this construction. But, alas! I was wholly ignorant of this subject; and, what was unfortunate, a few weeks only were allowed for the composition. I was determined, however, to make the best use of my time. I got access to the manuscript papers of a deceased friend who had been in the trade. I was acquainted also with several officers who had been in the West-Indies, and from these I gained something. But I still felt myself at a loss for materials, and I did not know where to get them; when going

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\* There are two prizes on each subject, one for the best, and the other for the second-best essays.

by accident into a friend's house, I took up a newspaper then lying on his table. One of the articles, which attracted my notice, was an advertisement, of "Anthony Benezet's Historical Account of Guinea;" I soon left my friend, and his paper, and, to lose no time, hastened to London to buy it. In this precious book, I found almost all I wanted. I obtained, by means of it, a knowledge of, and gained access to the great authorities of Adanson, Moore, Barbot, Smith, Bosman, and others. It was of great consequence, to know what these persons had said upon this subject. For having been themselves either long resident in Africa, or very frequently there, their knowledge of it could not be questioned. Having been concerned also in the trade, it was not likely that they would criminate themselves more than they could avoid. Writing too, at a time, when the abolition was not even thought of, they could not have been biassed with any view to that event.

Furnished then, in this manner, I began my work. But no person can tell the severe trial, which the writing of it proved to me. I had expected pleasure from the invention of the arguments, from the arrangement of them, from the putting of them together, and from the thought in the interim, that I was engaged in an innocent contest for literary honour. But all my pleasure was damped by the facts which were now continually before me. It was but one gloomy subject, from morning to night. In the day-time I was uneasy. In the night, I had little rest. I sometimes never closed my eye-lids for grief. It became now not so much a trial for academical reputation, as for the production of a work, which might be useful to injured Africa. And keeping this idea in my mind, ever after the perusal of Benezet, I always slept with a candle in my room, that I might rise out of bed, and put down such thoughts as might occur to

me in the night, if I judged them valuable, conceiving that no arguments of any moment should be lost in so great a cause. Having at length finished this painful task, I sent my Essay to the vice-chancellor, and soon afterwards found myself honoured as before with the first prize.

As it is usual to read these essays publicly in the senate-house, soon after the prize is adjudged, I was called to Cambridge for this purpose. I went and performed my office. On returning however to London, the subject of it almost wholly engrossed my thoughts. I became at times very seriously affected while upon the road. I frequently tried to persuade myself in these intervals, that the contents of my Essay could not be true. The more however, I reflected upon them, or rather upon the authorities on which they were founded, the more I gave them credit. A thought came into my mind, that if the contents of the Essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end. Agitated in this manner I reached home. This was in the summer of 1785.

In the course of the autumn of the same year, I experienced similar impressions. I walked frequently into the woods, that I might think on the subject in solitude, and find relief to my mind there. But there the question still recurred, "Are these things true?" Still the answer followed as instantaneously, "They are." Still the result accompanied it, "Then surely some person should interfere." I then began to envy those who had seats in parliament, and who had great riches, and widely extended connexions, which would enable them to take up this cause. Finding scarcely any one at that time who thought of it, I was turned frequently to myself. But here, many difficulties arose. It struck me, among others, that a young man of only twenty-four years of age, could not have that solid judgment, or

knowledge of men, manners, and things, which were requisite to qualify him to undertake a task of such magnitude and importance. And with whom was I to unite ? I believed also, that it looked so much like one of the feigned labours of Hercules, that my understanding would be suspected, if I proposed it. On ruminating however on the subject, I found one thing at least practicable, and that this also was in my power. I could translate my Latin dissertation. I could enlarge it usefully. I could see how the public received it, or how far they were likely to favour any serious measures, which should have a tendency to produce the abolition of the Slave-trade. Upon this, then, I determined ; and in the middle of the month of November, 1785, I began my work.

By the middle of January, I had finished half of it, though I had made considerable additions. I now thought of engaging with some bookseller, to print it when finished. For this purpose, I called upon Mr. Cadell, in the Strand, and consulted him about it. He said, that as the original Essay had been honoured by the University of Cambridge, with the first prize, this circumstance would ensure it a respectable circulation among persons of taste. I own I was not much pleased with his opinion. I wished the Essay to find its way among useful people, and among such as would think and act with me. Accordingly, I left Mr. Cadell, after having thanked him for his civility, and determined, as I thought I had time sufficient before dinner, to call upon a friend in the city. In going past the Royal Exchange, Mr. Joseph Hancock, one of the religious society of the Quakers, and with whose family my own had been long united in friendship, suddenly met me. He first accosted me, by saying, that I was the person whom he was wishing to see. He then asked me, why I had not published my Prize Essay ?

I asked him in return, what had made him think of that subject in particular? He replied, that his own Society had long taken it up as a religious body, and individuals among them were wishing to find me out. I asked him who? He answered, James Phillips, a bookseller, in George-yard, Lombard-street, and William Dillwyn, of Walthamstow, and others. Having but little time to spare I desired him to introduce me to one of them. In a few minutes he took me to James Phillips, who was then the only one of them in town; by whose conversation I was so much interested and encouraged, that without any further hesitation, I offered him the publication of my work. This accidental introduction of me to James Phillips, was, I found afterwards, a most happy circumstance for the promotion of the cause, which I had then so deeply at heart, as it led me to the knowledge of several of those, who became afterwards material coadjutors in it.

On my second visit to James Phillips, at which time I brought him about half my manuscript for the press, I desired him to introduce me to William Dillwyn, as he also had mentioned him to me on my first visit, and as I had not seen Mr. Hancock since. Matters were accordingly arranged, and a day appointed before I left him. On this day I had my first interview with my new friend. Two or three others of his own religious society were present, but who they were I do not now recollect. There seemed to be a great desire among them to know the motive by which I had been actuated, in contending for the prize. I told them frankly, that I had no motive, but that which other young men in the University had on such occasions; namely, the wish of being distinguished, or of obtaining literary honour; but that I had felt so deeply on the subject of it, that I had lately interested myself in it, from a motive of duty. My

conduct seemed to be highly approved by those present, and much conversation ensued, but it was of a general nature.

As William Dillwyn wished very much to see me at his house at Walthamstow, I appointed the thirteenth of March to spend the day with him there. We talked for the most part, during my stay, on the subject of my Essay. I soon discovered the treasure I had met with in his local knowledge, both of the Slave-trade and of slavery, as they existed in the United States, and I gained from him several facts, which with his permission, I afterwards inserted in my work. But how surprised was I to hear in the course of our conversation, of the labours of Granville Sharp, of the writings of Ramsay, and of the controversy in which the latter was engaged, of all which I had hitherto known nothing! How surprised was I to learn, that William Dillwyn himself, had two years before associated himself with five others for the purpose of enlightening the public mind upon this great subject! How astonished was I to find that a society had been formed in America, for the same object, with some of the principal members of which he was intimately acquainted! And how still more astonished at the inference which instantly rushed upon my mind, that he was capable of being made the great medium of connexion between them all. These thoughts almost overpowered me. I believe that after this I talked but little more to my friend. My mind was overwhelmed with the thought, that I had been providentially directed to his house; that the finger of Providence was beginning to be discernible; that the day-star of African liberty was rising, and that probably I might be permitted to become a humble instrument in promoting it.

In the course of attending to my work, as now in the press, James Phillips introduced me also to Granville Sharp, with whom I had afterwards many interesting interviews from

time to time, and whom I discovered to be a distant relation by my father's side.

He introduced me also by a letter to a correspondence with Mr. Ramsay, who in a short time afterwards came to London to see me.

He introduced me also to his cousin, Richard Phillips of Lincoln's Inn, who was at that time on the point of joining the religious society of the Quakers. In him I found much sympathy, and a willingness to co-operate with me. I shall only now add, that my work was at length printed; that it was entitled, "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the human Species, particularly the African, translated from a Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge, for the Year 1785; with Additions;" and that it was ushered into the world in the month of June 1786, or in about a year after it had been read in the Senate-house in its first form.

#### SECTION VI.

I had purposed, as I said before, when I determined to publish my Essay, to wait to see how the world would receive it, or what disposition there would be in the public to avour my measures for the abolition of the Slave-trade. But the conversation, which I had held on the thirteenth of March with William Dillwyn, continued to make such an impression upon me, that I thought now there could be no occasion for waiting for such a purpose. It seemed now only necessary to go forward. Others I found had already begun the work. I had been thrown suddenly among these, and into a new world of friends. I believed also, that a way was opening under Providence for support. And I now thought that nothing remained for me but to procure as many coadjutors as I could.

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I had long had the honour of the friendship of Mr. Bennet Langton, and I determined to carry him one of my books, and to interest his feelings in it, with a view of procuring his assistance in the cause. Mr. Langton was a gentleman of an ancient family, and respectable fortune in Lincolnshire, but resided then in Queen's-square, Westminster. He was known as the friend of Dr. Johnson, Jonas Hanway, Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and others. Among his acquaintance indeed were most of the literary, and eminent professional, and public-spirited men of the times.

By introducing my work to the sanction of a friend of such high character and extensive connexions, I thought I should be doing great things. And so the event proved. For when I went to him after he had read it, I found that it had made a deep impression upon his mind. As a friend to humanity he lamented over the miseries of the oppressed Africans, and over the crimes of their tyrants as a friend to morality and religion. From this time he became a zealous and active coadjutor in the cause, and continued so to the end of his valuable life.

The next person, to whom I gave my work with a like view, was Dr. Baker, a clergyman of the Establishment, and with whom I had been in habits of intimacy for some time. Dr. Baker was a learned and pious man. Having left him my book for a month, I called upon him. The result was that which I expected from so good a man. He did not wait for me to ask him for his co-operation, but he offered his services in any way which I might think most eligible, feeling it his duty, as he expressed it, to become an instrument in exposing such a complication of guilt and misery to the world. Dr. Baker became from this time an active coadjutor also, and continued so to his death.

While attempting to make friends in this manner, I re

ived a letter from Mr. Ramsay, with an invitation to spend a month at his house at Teston, near Maidstone in Kent. This I accepted, that I might communicate to him the progress I had made, that I might gain more knowledge from him on the subject, and that I might acquire new strength and encouragement to proceed. On hearing my account of my proceedings, which I detailed to him on the first evening of our meeting, he seemed almost overpowered with joy. He said he had been long of opinion, that the release of the Africans from the scourges of this cruel trade, was within the determined views of Providence, and that by turning the public attention to their misery, we should be the instruments of beginning the good work. He then informed me how long he himself had had their cause at heart; that communicating his feelings to Sir Charles Middleton (now Lord Barham) and his lady, the latter had urged him to undertake a work in their behalf; that her importunities were great respecting it; and that he had on this account, and in obedience also to his own feelings, as has been before mentioned, begun it: but that, foreseeing the censure and abuse, which such a subject, treated in any possible manner, must bring upon the author, he had laid it aside for some time. He had, however, resumed it at the solicitation of Dr. Porteus, then bishop of Chester, after which, in the year 1784, it made its appearance in the world.

I was delighted with this account on the first evening of my arrival; but more particularly as I collected from it, that I might expect in the bishop of Chester and Sir Charles Middleton, two new friends to the cause. This expectation was afterwards fully realized, as the reader will see in its proper place. But I was still more delighted, when I was informed that Sir Charles and Lady Middleton, with Mrs. Bouverie, lived at Teston-hall, in a park, which was but a

few yards from the house in which I then was. In the morning I desired an introduction to them, which accordingly took place, and I found myself much encouraged and supported by this visit.

When at dinner one day with the family, at Teston-hall, I was much pleased with the turn which the conversation had taken on the subject, and in the joy of my heart, I exclaimed that, "I was ready to devote myself to the cause." This brought great commendation from those present; and Sir Charles Middleton added, that if I wanted any information in the course of my future inquiries relative to Africa, which he could procure me as comptroller of the navy, such as extracts from the journals of the ships of war to that continent, or from other papers, I should have free access to his office. This offer I received with thankfulness, and it operated as a new encouragement to me to proceed.

The next morning, when I awoke, one of the first things that struck me was, that I had given a pledge to the company the day before, that I would devote myself to the cause of the oppressed Africans. I became a little uneasy at this. I questioned whether I had considered matters sufficiently to be able to go so far with propriety. I determined therefore, to give the subject a full consideration, and accordingly I walked to the place of my usual meditations, the woods.

Having now reached a place of solitude, I began to balance every thing on both sides of the question. I considered first, that I had not yet obtained information sufficient on the subject, to qualify me for the undertaking of such a work. But I reflected, on the other hand, that Sir Charles Middleton had just opened to me a new source of knowledge; that I should be backed by the local information of Dillwyn and Ramsay, and that surely, by taking pains, I could acquire more.

I then considered, that I had not yet a sufficient number of friends to support me. This occasioned me to review them. I had now Sir Charles Middleton, who was in the House of Commons. I was sure of Dr. Porteus, who was in the House of Lords. I could count upon Lord Scarsdale, who was a peer also. I had secured Mr. Langton, who had a most extensive acquaintance with members of both houses of the legislature. I had also secured Dr. Baker, who had similar connexions. I could depend upon Granville Sharp, James Phillips, Richard Phillips, Ramsay, Dillwyn, and the little committee to which he belonged, as well as the whole society of the Quakers. I thought therefore, upon the whole, that, considering the short time I had been at work, I was well off with respect to support. I believed also that there were still several of my own acquaintance, whom I could interest in the question, and I did not doubt that, by exerting myself diligently, persons, who were then strangers to me, would be raised up in time.

I considered lastly, that, if I took up the question, I must devote myself wholly to it. I was sensible that a little labour now and then would be inadequate to the purpose, or that, where the interests of so many thousand persons were likely to be affected, constant exertion would be necessary. I felt certain that, if ever the matter were to be taken up, there could be no hope of success, except it should be taken up by some one, who would make it an object or business of his life. I thought too that a man's life might not be more than adequate to the accomplishment of the end. But I knew of no one who could devote such a portion of time to it. Sir Charles Middleton, though he was so warm and zealous, was greatly occupied in the discharge of his office. Mr. Langton spent a great portion of his time in the education of his children. Dr. Baker had a great deal

to do in the performance of his parochial duty. The Quakers were almost all of them in trade. I could look therefore, to no person but myself; and the question was, whether I was prepared to make the sacrifice. In favour of the undertaking I urged to myself, that never was any cause, which had been taken up by man in any country, or in any age, so great and important; that never was there one in which so much misery was heard to cry for redress; that never was there one, in which so much good could be done; never one, in which the duty of Christian charity could be so extensively exercised; never one, more worthy of the devotion of a whole life towards it; and that, if a man thought properly, he ought to rejoice to have been called into existence, if he were only permitted to become an instrument in forwarding it in any part of its progress. Against these sentiments on the other hand I had to urge, that I had been designed for the church; that I had already advanced as far as deacon's orders in it: that my prospects there, on account of my connexions were then brilliant; that, by appearing to desert my profession, my family would be dissatisfied, if not unhappy. These thoughts pressed upon me, and rendered the conflict difficult. But the sacrifice of my prospects staggered me, I own, the most. When the other objections, which I have related, occurred to me, my enthusiasm instantly, like a flash of lightning, consumed them: but this stuck to me, and troubled me. I had ambition. I had a thirst after worldly interest and honours, and I could not extinguish it at once. I was more than two hours in solitude under this painful conflict. At length, I yielded, not because I saw any reasonable prospect of success in my new undertaking (for all cool-headed and cool-hearted men would have pronounced against it) but in obedience, I believe, to a higher Power. And this I can say, that both on

ment of this resolution, and for some time afterwards, more sublime and happy feelings, than at any former d of my life.

ving now made up my mind on the subject, I informed Ramsay, that in a few days I should be leaving Teston, I might begin my labours, according to the pledge I given him.

my return to London, I called upon William Dillwyn, form him of the resolution I had made at Teston, and l him at his town lodgings in the Poultry. I informed also, that I had a letter of introduction in my pocket Sir Charles Middleton to Samuel Hoare, with whom I o converse on the subject. The latter gentleman had asted himself the year before as one of the committee e Black poor, in London, whom Mr. Sharp was send- nder the auspices of government, to Sierra Leone. iam Dillwyn said he would go with me and introduce himself. On our arrival in Lombard-street, I saw my friend, with whom we conversed for some time. From e I proceeded, accompanied by both, to the house of s Phillips, in George-yard, to whom I was desirous of unicating my resolution also. We found him at home, rsing with a friend of the same religious society, whose was Joseph Gurney Bevan. I then repeated my res- n before them all. We had much friendly and satis- y conversation together. I received much encourage- on every side, and I fixed to meet them again at the where we then were in three days.

the evening of the same day, I waited upon Granville p to make the same communication to him. He receiv- with great pleasure, and he hoped I would have gth to proceed. From thence, I went to the Baptist- coffee-house, in Chancery-lane, and having engaged

with the master of the house, that I should always have one private room to myself when I wanted it, I took up my abode there, in order to be near my friend Richard Phillips, of Lincoln's Inn, from whose advice and assistance I had formed considerable expectations.

The first matter for our deliberation, after we had thus become neighbours, was, what plan I ought to pursue to give effect to the resolution I had taken.

After having discussed the matter two or three times at his chambers, it seemed to be our opinion, 'That as members of the legislature could do more to the purpose in this question than any other persons, it would be proper to circulate all the remaining copies of my work among these, in order that they might thus obtain information upon the subject. Secondly, That it would be proper that I should wait personally upon several of these also. And thirdly, That I should be endeavouring in the interim to enlarge my own knowledge, that I might thus be enabled to answer the various objections, which might be advanced on the other side of the question, as well as become qualified to be a manager of the cause.

On the third day, or at the time appointed, I went with Richard Phillips to George-yard, Lombard-street, where I met all my friends as before. I communicated to them the opinion we had formed at Lincoln's Inn, relative to my future proceedings in the three different branches as now detailed. They approved the plan, and I desired a number of my books to be sent to me at my new lodgings for the purpose of distribution.

My first care was, that the books should be put into proper hands. Accordingly I went round among my friends from day to day, wishing to secure this before I attended to any other of the objects. In this I was much assisted by

my friend Richard Phillips. Mr. Langton began the distribution of them. He made a point either of writing to, or of calling upon those, to whom he sent them. Dr. Baker took the charge of several for the same purpose. Lord and Lady Scarsdale of others. Sir Charles and Lady Middleton of others. Mr. Sheldon, at the request of Richard Phillips, introduced me by letter to several members of parliament, to whom I wished to deliver them myself.

This distribution of my books having been consigned to proper hands, I began to qualify myself, by obtaining further knowledge, for the management of this great cause. As I had obtained the principal part of it from reading, I thought I ought now to see what could be seen, and to know from living persons what could be known, on the subject. With respect to the first of these points, the river Thames presented itself as at hand. Ships were going occasionally from the port of London to Africa, and why could I not get on board them and examine for myself? After diligent inquiry, I heard of one which had just arrived. I found her to be a little wood-vessel called the *Lively*, captain Williamson, or one which traded to Africa, in the natural productions of the country, such as ivory, beeswax, Malaguetta pepper, palmoil, and dyewoods. I obtained specimens of some of these, so that I now became possessed of some of those things of which I had only read before. On conversing with the mate, he showed me one or two pieces of the cloth made by the natives, from their own cotton. I prevailed upon him to sell me a piece of each. Here new feelings arose, and particularly when I considered that persons of so much apparent ingenuity, and capable of such beautiful work as the Africans, should be made slaves, and reduced to a level with the brute creation.

The next vessel I boarded, was the *Fly*, captain Colley:

Here I found myself for the first time, on the deck of a slave-vessel. The sight of the rooms below, and of the gratings above, and of the barricado across the deck, and the explanation of the uses of all these, filled me both with melancholy and horror. I found soon afterwards a fire of indignation kindling within me.

I was equally assiduous in obtaining intelligence wherever it could be had ; and being now always on the watch, I was frequently falling in with individuals from whom I gained something. By these means things began to unfold themselves to me more and more, and I found my stock of knowledge, almost daily on the increase.

While, however, I was forwarding this, I was not inattentive to the other objects of my pursuit, which was that of waiting upon members personally. The first I called upon was, Sir Richard Hill. At the first interview he espoused the cause. I waited then upon others, and they professed themselves friendly ; but they seemed to make this profession more from the emotion of good hearts, revolting at the bare mention of the Slave-trade, than from any knowledge concerning it.

Among those, whom I visited, was Mr. Wilberforce. On my first interview with him, he stated frankly, that the subject had often employed his thoughts, and that it was near his heart. He seemed earnest about it, and also very desirous of taking the trouble of inquiring further into it. Having read my book, which I had delivered to him in person, he sent for me. He expressed a wish that I would make him acquainted with some of my authorities for the assertions in it, which I did afterwards to his satisfaction. On learning my intention to devote myself to the cause, he paid me many handsome compliments. He then desired me to call upon him often, and to acquaint him with my progress

from time to time. He expressed also his willingness to afford me any assistance in his power in the prosecution of my pursuits.

The manner in which Mr. Wilberforce had received me, and the pains which he had taken, and was still taking, to satisfy himself of the truth of those enormities which had been charged upon the Slave-trade, tended much to enlarge my hope, that they might become at length, the subject of a parliamentary inquiry.

I now gained access to the Custom-house in London, where I picked up much valuable information for my purpose.

Having had reason to believe that the Slave-trade was peculiarly fatal to those employed in it, I wished much to get copies of many of the muster-rolls from the Custom-house at Liverpool for a given time. James Phillips wrote to his friend William Rathbone, who was one of his own religious society, and who resided there, to procure them. They were accordingly sent up. The examination of these, which took place at the chambers of Richard Phillips, was long and tedious. We looked over them together. We usually met for this purpose at nine in the evening, and we seldom parted till one, and sometimes not till three in the morning. From these muster-rolls, I may observe, that we gained the most important information. We ascertained beyond the power of contradiction, that more than half of the seamen, who went out with the ships in the Slave-trade, did not return with them, and that of these so many perished, as amounted to one-fifth of all employed. As to what became of the remainder, the muster-rolls did not inform us. This, therefore, was left to us as a subject for our future inquiry.

In endeavouring to enlarge my knowledge, my thoughts

were frequently turned to the West-Indian part of the question, and in this department, my friend Richard Phillips, gained me important intelligence. He put into my hands several documents concerning estates in the West-Indies, which he had mostly from the proprietors themselves, where the slaves by mild and prudent usage had so increased in population, as to supersede the necessity of the Slave trade.

By attending to those and to various other parts of the subject, I began to see as it were with new eyes : I was enabled to make several necessary discriminations, to reconcile things before seemingly contradictory, and to answer many objections which had hitherto put on a formidable shape. But most of all was I rejoiced at the thought that I should soon be able to prove that which I had never doubted, but which had hitherto been beyond my power in this case, that Providence, in ordaining laws relative to the agency of man, had never made that to be wise which was immoral, and that the Slave-trade would be found as impolitic as it was inhuman and unjust.

In keeping up my visits to members of parliament, I was particularly attentive to Mr. Wilberforce, whom I found daily becoming more interested in the fate of Africa. I now made to him a regular report of my progress, of the sentiments of those in parliament whom I had visited, of the disposition of my friends in the city, of whom he had often heard me speak, of my discoveries from the Custom-houses of London and Liverpool, of my documents concerning West Indian estates, and of all, indeed, that had occurred to me worth mentioning. He had himself also been making his inquiries, which he communicated to me in return. Our intercourse had now become frequent, no one week elapsing without an interview. At one of these, I suggested to him the propriety of having occasional meetings at his own

house, consisting of a few friends in parliament, who might converse on the subject. Of this he approved. The persons present at the first meeting were Mr. Wilberforce, the Honourable John Villiers, Mr. Powys, Sir Charles Middleton, Sir Richard Hill, Mr. Granville Sharp, Mr. Ramsay, Dr. Gregory, and myself. At this meeting I read a paper, giving an account of the light I had collected in the course of my inquiries, with observations as well on the impolicy as on the wickedness of the trade. Many questions arose, out of the reading of this little Essay. Many answers followed. Objections were started and canvassed. In short, this measure was found so useful, that certain other evenings as well as mornings were fixed upon for the same purpose.

Soon after this, I met my friends in the city. All were unanimous for the formation of a committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade. On the next day we met by agreement, for this purpose. It was then resolved unanimously, among other things, That the Slave-trade was both impolitic and unjust. It was resolved also, That the following persons be a committee for procuring such information and evidence and publishing the same, as may tend to the abolition of the Slave-trade, and for directing the application of such monies as have been already, and may hereafter be collected for the above purpose.

Granville Sharp,

William Dillwyn,

Samuel Hoare,

George Harrison,

John Lloyd,

Joseph Woods,

Thomas Clarkson,

Richard Phillips,

John Barton,

Joseph Hooper,

James Phillips,

Philip Sansom.

All these were present. Granville Sharp, who stands at the head of the list, and who, as the father of the cause in

England, was called to the chair, may be considered as representing the first class of forerunners and coadjutors, as it has been before described. The five next, of whom Samuel Hoare was chosen as the treasurer, were they who had been the committee of the second class, or of the Quakers in England, with the exception of Dr. Knowles, who was then dying, but who, having heard of our meeting, sent a message to us, to exhort us to proceed. The third class, or that of the Quakers in America, may be considered as represented by William Dillwyn, by whom they were afterwards joined to us in correspondence. The two who stand next, and in which I am included, may be considered as representing the fourth, most of the members of which we had been the means of raising. Thus, on the twenty-second of May 1787, the representatives of all the four classes, of which I have been giving a history, from the year 1516, met together, and were united in that committee, to which I have been all along directing the attention of the reader; a committee, which, labouring afterwards with Mr. Wilberforce, as a parliamentary head, did, under Providence, in the space of twenty years, contribute to put an end to a trade which, measuring its magnitude by its crimes and sufferings, was one of the greatest practical evils that ever afflicted the human race.

After the formation of the committee,\* notice was sent to Mr. Wilberforce of the event, and a friendship began, which has continued uninterruptedly between them, from that to the present day.



\* All the members were of the society of the Quakers, except Mr. Sharp, Sansom, and myself. Joseph Gurney Bevan was present on the day before this meeting. He desired to belong to the society, but to be excused from belonging to the committee.

## CHAPTER II.

*Author's travels and labours to obtain information.*

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SECTION I.

IT was shown, that twelve individuals, met together, by means which no one could have foreseen, on the twenty-second of May 1787. At this meeting it was resolved, that no less than three members should form a quorum.

On the twenty-fourth of May, the committee met again, to promote the object of its institution.

The treasurer reported at this meeting, that the subscriptions already received, amounted to one hundred and thirty-six pounds.

As I had foreseen, long before this time, that my Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, was too large for general circulation, and yet that a general circulation of knowledge on this subject was absolutely necessary, I determined, directly after the formation of the committee, to write a short pamphlet, consisting only of eight or ten pages for this purpose. I called it, "A Summary View of the Slave-trade, and of the probable Consequences of its Abolition." It began by exhibiting to the reader the various unjustifiable ways in which persons, living on the coast of Africa, became slaves. It then explained the treatment which these experienced on their passage, the number dying in the course of it, and the treatment of the survivors

in the colonies of those nations, to which they were carried. It then announced the speedy publication of a work on the Impolicy of the trade, the contents of which, as far as I could then see, I gave generally under the following heads : Part the first, it was said, would show, that Africa was capable of offering to us a trade in its own natural productions as well as in the persons of men ; that the trade in the persons of men was profitable but to a few ; that its value was diminished from many commercial considerations ; that it was also, highly destructive to our seamen : and that the branch of it, by which we supplied the island of St. Domingo with slaves, was peculiarly impolitic on that account. Part the second, it was said, would show, that, if the slaves were kindly treated in our colonies, they would increase ; that the abolition of the trade would necessarily secure such a treatment to them, and that it would produce many other advantages which would be then detailed.

This little piece I presented to the committee at this their second meeting. It was then duly read and examined ; and the result was, that, after some little correction, it was approved, and that two thousand copies of it were ordered to be printed, with lists of the subscribers and of the committee, and to be sent to various parts of the kingdom.

On June the seventh, the committee met again, for the dispatch of business, when, among other things, they voted their thanks to Dr. Baker, of Lower Grosvenor-street, who had been one of my first assistants, for his services to the cause.

At this sitting, at which ten members were present out of the twelve, a discussion unexpectedly arose on a most important subject. The committee, finding that their meetings began to be approved by many, and that the cause under their care was likely to spread, and foreseeing also the necessity there would soon be of making themselves known as

a public body throughout the kingdom, thought it right that they should assume some title, which should be a permanent one, and which should be expressive of their future views. This gave occasion to them to reconsider the object for which they had associated, and to fix and define it in such a manner, that there should be no misunderstanding about it in the public mind. In looking into the subject, it appeared to them, that there were two evils, quite distinct from each other, which it might become their duty to endeavour to remove. The first was, the evil of the Slave-trade, in consequence of which many thousand persons were every year fraudulently and forcibly taken from their country, their relations, and friends, and from all that they esteemed valuable in life. The second was, the evil of slavery itself, in consequence of which the same persons were forced into a situation, where they were deprived of the rights of men, where they were obliged to linger out their days, subject to excessive labour and cruel punishments, and where their children were to inherit the same hard lot. Now the question was, which of the two evils the committee should select, for its attention, with a view to the removal of it; or whether, with the same view, it should direct its attention to both of them.

It appeared soon to be the sense of the committee, that to aim at the removal of both, would be to aim at too much, and that by doing this, we might lose all.

The question then was, which of the two they were to take as their object.

In looking into this question, it seemed to make a material difference which of the two they selected, as far as they had in view the due execution of any laws, which might be made respecting them, and their own prospect of success in the undertaking. For, by aiming at the abolition of the

Slave-trade, they were laying the axe at the very root. By asking the government of the country to do this, and this only, they were asking for that, which it had an indisputable right to do; namely, to regulate or abolish any of its branches of commerce; whereas it was doubtful, whether it could interfere with the management of the internal affairs of the colonies, or whether, this was not wholly the province of the legislatures established there. By asking the government, again, to do this, and this only, they were asking what it could really enforce. It could station its ships of war, and command its custom-houses, so as to carry any act of this kind into effect. But it could not ensure that an act to be observed in the heart of the islands should be enforced.

Impressed by these arguments, the committee was clearly of opinion, that they should define their object to be the abolition of the Slave-trade, and not of the slavery which sprung from it. Hence from this time, and in allusion to the month when this discussion took place, they styled themselves in their different advertisements, and reports, though they were first associated in the month of May, "The Committee instituted in June, 1787, for effecting the Abolition of the Slave-trade." Thus, at the very outset, they took a ground, which was, for ever tenable. Thus they were enabled also to answer the objection, which was afterwards so constantly and so industriously circulated against them, that they were going to emancipate the slaves. And I have no doubt that this wise decision contributed greatly to their success; for I am persuaded that, if they had adopted the other object, they could not for years to come, if ever, have succeeded in their attempt.

Before the committee broke up, I represented to them the necessity there was of obtaining further knowledge on all those individual points, which might be said to belong to

the great subject of the abolition of the Slave-trade. In the first place, this knowledge was necessary for me, if I were to complete my work on the Impolicy of this Trade, which work the Summary View, just printed, had announced to the world. It would be necessary also, in case the Slave-trade should become a subject of parliamentary inquiry ; for this inquiry could not proceed without evidence. And if any time was peculiarly fit for the procuring of such information or evidence, it was the present. At this time the passions of men had not been heated by any public agitation of the question, nor had interest felt itself biassed to conceal the truth. But as soon as ever it should be publicly understood, that a parliamentary inquiry was certain, (which we ourselves believed would be the case, but which interested men did not then know) we should find many of the avenues to information closed against us. I proposed therefore, that some one of the committee should undertake a journey to Bristol, Liverpool, and Lancaster, where he should reside for a time, to collect further light upon this subject ; and that, if others should feel their occupations or engagements to be such as would make such a journey unsuitable, I would undertake it myself. I begged therefore, the favour of the different members of the committee, to turn the matter over in their minds, by the next meeting, that we might then talk over and decide upon the propriety of the measure.

The committee held its fourth meeting on the twelfth of June. Among the subjects, which were then brought forward, was, that of the journey before mentioned. The propriety, and indeed, even the necessity of it was so apparent, that I was requested by all present, to undertake it, and a minute for that purpose was entered upon our records. Of this journey, as gradually unfolding light on the subject,

and as peculiarly connected with the promotion of our object, I shall now give an account ; after which I shall return to the proceedings of the committee.

Having made preparations for my journey, I took my leave of the different individuals of the committee. I called upon Mr. Wilberforce, also, with the same design. He was then very ill, and in bed. After conversing as much as he well could in his weak state, he held out his hand to me, and wished me success.

The first place I resolved to visit was Bristol. Accordingly, I directed my course thither. On turning a corner, within about a mile of that city, at about eight in the evening, I came within sight of it. The weather was rather hazy, which occasioned it to look of unusual dimensions. The bells of some of the churches were then ringing ; the sound of them did not strike me, till I had turned the corner before mentioned, when it came upon me at once. It filled me almost directly, with a melancholy, for which I could not account. I began now to tremble, for the first time, at the arduous task I had undertaken, of attempting to subvert one of the branches of the commerce of the great place which was then before me. But in journeying on, I became more calm and composed. My spirits began to return. When, therefore, I entered the city, I entered it with an undaunted spirit, determining that no labour should make me shrink, nor danger, nor even persecution, deter me from my pursuit.

My first introduction was by means of a letter to Harry Gandy, who had then become one of the religious society of the Quakers. This introduction to him was particularly useful to me, for he had been a sea-faring man. In his early youth, he had been two voyages in the Slave-trade, so that he had known the nature and practices of it. This enabled

him to give me much useful information on the subject ; and as he had frequently felt, as he grew up, deep affliction of mind for having been concerned in it, he was impelled to forward my views as much as possible, under an idea that he should be thus making some reparation for the indiscreet and profane occupations of his youth.

I was also introduced to the families of James Harford, John Lury, Matthew Wright, Philip Debell Tucket, Thomas Bonville, and John Waring ; all of whom were of the same religious society. I gained an introduction, also, soon afterwards, to George Fisher.

The objects I had marked down as those to be attended to, were, to ascertain what were the natural productions of Africa, and, if possible, to obtain specimens of them, with a view of forming a cabinet or collection ; to procure as much information as I could, relative to the manner of obtaining slaves on the continent of Africa, of transporting them to the West-Indies, and of treating them there ; to prevail upon persons, having a knowledge of any or all of these circumstances, to come forward to be examined as evidences before parliament, if such an examination should take place ; to make myself still better acquainted with the loss of seamen in the Slave-trade ; also with the loss of those who were employed in the other trades from the same port ; to know the nature, quantity, and value of the imports and exports of goods in the former case : there were some other objects, which I classed under the head of Miscellaneous.

In my first movements about this city, I found that people talked very openly on the subject of the Slave-trade. They seemed to be well acquainted with the various circumstances belonging to it. There were facts, in short, in every body's mouth, concerning it ; and every body seemed

to execrate it, though no one thought of its abolition. In this state of things I perceived that my course was obvious ; for I had little else to do, in pursuing two or three of my objects, than to trace the foundation of those reports which were in circulation.

On the third of July 1787, I heard that the ship *Brothers*, then lying in King-road, for Africa, could not get her seamen, and that a party which had been put on board, becoming terrified by the prospect of their situation, had left her on Sunday morning. On inquiring further, I found that those who had navigated her on her last voyage, thirty-two of whom had died, had been so dreadfully used by the captain, that he could not get hands in the present. It was added, that the treatment of seamen was a crying evil in this trade, and that consequently few would enter into it, so that there was at all times a great difficulty in procuring them, though they were ready enough to enter into other trades.

The relation of these circumstances made me acquainted with two things, of which I had not before heard ; namely, the aversion of seamen to engage, and the bad usage of them when engaged, in this cruel trade ; into both of which I determined immediately to inquire.

By means of my late friend, Truman Harford, the eldest son of the respectable family of that name, to which I have already mentioned myself to have been introduced, I gained access to the muster-roll of the ship *Brothers*. On looking over the names of her last crew, I found the melancholy truth confirmed, that thirty-two of them had been placed among the dead.

Having ascertained this circumstance, I became eager to inquire into the truth of the others, but more particularly of the treatment of one of the seamen, which, as it was report-

ed to me, exceeded all belief. His name was John Dean ; he was a Black man, but free. The report was, that for a trifling circumstance, for which he was in no wise to blame, the captain had fastened him with his belly to the deck. and that, in this situation, he had poured hot pitch upon his back, and made incisions in it with hot tongs.

Before, however, I attempted to learn the truth of this barbarous proceeding, I thought I would look into the ship's muster roll, to see if I could find the name of such a man. On examination, I found it to be the last on the list. John Dean, it appeared, had been one of the original crew, having gone on board, from Bristol, on the twenty-second day of July, 1785.

While I was investigating this matter, I was introduced to Mr. Sydenham Teast, a respectable ship-builder in Bristol, and the owner of vessels trading to Africa in the natural productions of that country. I mentioned to him by accident, what I had heard relative to the treatment of John Dean. He said it was true. An Attorney\* in London, had then taken up his cause. in consequence of which the captain had been prevented from sailing, till he could find persons who would be answerable for the damages which might be awarded against him in a court of law.

This transaction, which I now believed to be true, had the effect of preparing me for crediting whatever I might hear concerning the barbarities said to be practised in this

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\* I afterwards found out this attorney. He described the transaction to me, as by report, it had taken place, and informed me that he had made the captain of the Brothers pay for his barbarity.

trade. It kindled also, a fire of indignation within me, and produced in me both anxiety and spirit to proceed.

But while I was in pursuit of this one object, I was not unmindful of the others which I had marked out for myself. I had already procured an interview, as I have mentioned, with Mr. Sydenham Teast. I had done this with a view of learning from him what were the different productions of the continent of Africa, as far as he had been able to ascertain from the imports by his own vessels. He was very open and communicative. He had imported ivory, red-wood, cam-wood, and gum-copal. He purposed to import palm oil. He observed that bees-wax might be collected also upon the coast. Of his gum-copal he gave me a specimen. He furnished me also with two different specimens of unknown woods, which had the appearance of being useful. One of his captains, he informed me, had been told by the natives, that cotton, pink color in the pod, grew in their country. He was of opinion, that many valuable productions might be found upon this continent.

From Thomas Bonville I collected two specimens of cloth made by the natives, and from others a beautiful piece of tulip-wood, a small piece of wood similar to mahogany, and a sample of fine rice, all of which had been brought from the same continent.

Among others, who were useful to me in my pursuit, was Mr Henry Sulgar, an amiable minister of the gospel belonging to the religious society of the Moravians, in the same city. From him I first procured authentic documents relative to the treacherous massacre at Calabar. This cruel transaction had been frequently mentioned to me; but as it had taken place twenty years before, I could not find one person who had been engaged in it, nor could I come, in a satisfactory manner, at the various particulars belonging to

it. My friend, however, put me in possession of copies of the real depositions which had been taken in the case of the King against Lippincott and others relative to this event. The tragedy, of which they gave a circumstantial account, I shall present to the reader in as concise a manner as I can.

In the year 1767, the ships *Indian Queen*, *Duke of York*, *Nancy*, and *Concord*, of Bristol, the *Edgar*, of Liverpool, and the *Canterbury*, of London, lay in old Calabar river.

It happened at this time that a quarrel subsisted between the principal inhabitants of Old Town, and those of New Town, Old Calabar, which had originated in a jealousy respecting slaves. The captains of the vessels now mentioned, joined in sending several letters to the inhabitants of Old Town, but particularly to Ephraim Robin John, who was at that time a grandee or principal inhabitant of the place. The tenour of these letters was, that they were sorry that any jealousy or quarrel should subsist between the two parties; that if the inhabitants of Old Town would come on board, they would afford them security and protection; adding at the same time, that their intention in inviting them was, that they might become mediators, and thus heal their disputes.

The inhabitants of Old Town, happy to find that their differences were likely to be accommodated, joyfully accepted the invitation. The three brothers of the grandee just mentioned, the eldest of whom was Amboe Robin John, first entered their canoe, attended by twenty-seven others, and, being followed by nine canoes, directed their course to the *Indian Queen*. They were dispatched from thence the next morning to the *Edgar*, and afterwards to the *Duke of York*, on board of which they went, leaving their canoe and attendants by the side of the same vessel. In the mean time the

people on board the other canoes were either distributed on board, or lying close to, the other ships.

This being the situation of the three brothers, and of the principal inhabitants of the place, the treachery now began to appear. The crew of the Duke of York, aided by the captain and mates, and armed with pistols and cutlasses, rushed into the cabin, with an intent to seize the persons of their three innocent and unsuspecting guests. The unhappy men, alarmed at this violation of the rights of hospitality, and struck with astonishment at the behaviour of their supposed friends, attempted to escape through the cabin windows, but being wounded, were obliged to desist, and to submit to be put in irons.

In the same moment, in which this atrocious attempt had been made, an order had been given to fire upon the canoe, which was then lying by the side of the Duke of York. The canoe soon filled and sunk, and the wretched attendants were either seized, killed, or drowned. Most of the other ships followed the example. Great numbers were additionally killed and drowned on the occasion, and others were swimming to the shore.

At this juncture the inhabitants of New Town, who had concealed themselves in the bushes by the water-side, and between whom and the commanders of the vessels, the plan had been previously concerted, came out from their hiding places, and embarking in their canoes, made for such as were swimming from the fire of the ships. The ships' boats also were manned, and joined in the pursuit. They butchered the greatest part of those whom they caught. Many dead bodies were soon seen upon the sands, and others were floating upon the water; and including those who were seized and carried off, and those who were drowned and killed, either by the firing of the ships, or by the people of New

Town, three hundred were lost to the inhabitants of Old Town on that day.

The carnage, which I have been now describing, was scarcely over, when a canoe, full of the principal people of New Town, who had been the promoters of the scheme, dropped along-side of the Duke of York. They demanded the person of Amboe Robin John, the brother of the grandee of Old Town, and the eldest of the three on board. The unfortunate man put the palms of his hands together, and beseeched the commander of the vessel, that he would not violate the rights of hospitality, by giving up an unoffending stranger to his enemies. But no entreaties could avail. The commander received from the New Town people a slave, of the name of Econg, in his stead, and then forced him into the canoe, where his head was immediately struck off in the sight of the crew, and of his afflicted and disconsolate brothers. As for them, they escaped his fate, but they were carried off with their attendants to the West-Indies, and sold for slaves.

The knowledge of this tragical event, now fully confirmed me in the sentiment, that the hearts of those, who were concerned in this traffic, became unusually hardened, and that I might readily believe any atrocities, however great, which might be related of them. It made also my blood boil as it were within me. It gave a new spring to my exertions. And I rejoiced, sorrowful as I otherwise was, that I had visited Bristol, if it had been only to gain an accurate statement of this one fact.

#### SECTION II.

Having heard by accident, that the inhabitants of the town of Bridgewater, had sent a petition to the House of Commons, in the year 1785, for the abolition of the Slave-

trade, as has been related in a former part of this work, I terminated, while my feelings were warm, to go there, and try to find out those who had been concerned in it, and confer with them as the tried friends of the cause. 'time seemed to me to be approaching, when the public v should be raised against this enormous evil. I was that it was only necessary for the inhabitants of this fav ed island to know it, to feel a just indignation against Accordingly I set off. \* My friend George Fisher, who before mentioned to have been of the religious society of Quakers, gave me an introduction to the respectable fa of Ball, which was of the same religious persuasion. I open to those, whom I saw, the discoveries I had made r tive to the loss and ill treatment of seamen ; at which seemed to be much moved ; and it was agreed, that, should be thought a proper measure, (of which I would form them, when I had consulted the committee) a see petition should be sent to Parliament from the inhabits praying for the abolition of the Slave-trade. With view I left them several of my Summary Views, before tioned, to distribute, that the inhabitants might know particularly the nature of the evil, against which they going to complain. On my return to Bristol, I determ to inquire into the truth of the reports that seamen ha aversion to enter, and that they were inveigled, if not o forced into this hateful employment For this purpose I introduced to a landlord of the name of Thompson, who a public house called the Seven Stars. He was a ver telligent man, was accustomed to receive sailors, when charged at the end of their voyages, and to board then their vessels went out again, or to find them births in ot He avoided however, all connexion with the Slave-trade claring that the credit of his house would be ruined, i

were known to send those, who put themselves under his care, into it.

From him I collected the truth of all that had been stated to me on this subject. But I told him, I should not be satisfied, until I had beheld those scenes myself, which he had described to me ; and I entreated him to take me into them, saying that I would reward him for all his time and trouble, and that I would never forget him while I lived. To this he consented ; and as three or four slave-vessels at this time were preparing for their voyages, it was time that we should begin our rounds. At about twelve at night, we generally sat out, and were employed till two, and sometimes three in the morning. He led me from one of those public houses to another, which the mates of the slave-vessels used to frequent to pick up their hands. These houses were in Marsh-street, and most of them were then kept by Irishmen. The scenes witnessed in these houses were truly distressing to me ; and yet, if I wished to know practically what I had purposed, I could not avoid them. Music, dancing, rioting, drunkenness, and profane swearing, were kept up from night to night. The young mariner, if a stranger to the port, and unacquainted with the nature of the Slave-trade, was sure to be picked up. The novelty of the voyages, the superiority of the wages in this, over any other trades, and the privileges of various kinds, were set before him. Gullied in this manner, he was frequently enticed to the boat, which was waiting to carry him away. If these prospects did not attract him, he was plied with liquor till he became intoxicated, when a bargain was made over him between the landlord and the mate. After this his senses were kept in such a constant state of stupefaction by the liquor, that in time, the former might do with him what he pleased. Seamen also were boarded in these houses, who, when the

Slave-ships were going out, but at no other time, were encouraged to spend more than they had money to pay for; and to these, when they had thus exceeded, but one alternative was given, namely, a slave-vessel, or a jail. These distressing scenes, I found myself obliged frequently to witness, for I was no less than nineteen times occupied in making these hateful rounds. And I can say from my own experience, and all the information I could collect from Thompson and others, that no such practices were in use to obtain seamen for other trades.

The treatment of the seamen employed in the Slave-trade had so deeply interested me, and now the manner of procuring them, that I was determined to make myself acquainted with their whole history; for I found by report, that they were not only personally ill-treated, as I have already painfully described, but that they were robbed by artifice of those wages, which had been held up to them as so superior in this service. All persons were obliged to sign articles, that, in case they should die or be discharged during the voyage, the wages then due to them, should be paid in the currency where the vessel carried her slaves, and that half of the wages due to them on their arrival there, should be paid in the same manner, and that they were never permitted to read over the articles they had signed. By means of this iniquitous practice, the wages in the Slave-trade, though nominally higher, in order to induce seamen to engage in it, were actually lower than in other trades. All these usages I ascertained in such a manner, that no person could doubt the truth of them. I actually obtained possession of articles of agreement belonging to these vessels, which had been signed and executed in former voyages. I made the merchants themselves, by sending those seamen, who had claims upon them, to ask for their accounts current with

their respective ships, furnish me with such documents as would have been evidence against them in any court of law. On whatever branch of the system I turned my eyes, I found it equally barbarous. The trade was, in short, one mass of iniquity from the beginning to the end.

I employed myself occasionally in the Merchant's-hall, in making copies of the muster-rolls of ships sailing to different parts of the world, that I might make a comparative view of the loss of Seamen in the Slave trade, with that of those in the other trades from the same port. The result of this employment, showed me the importance of it : for, when I considered how partial the inhabitants of this country were to their fellow-citizens, the seamen belonging to it, and in what estimation the members of the legislature held them, by enforcing the Navigation-Act, which they considered to be the bulwark of the nation, and by giving bounties to certain trades, that these might become so many nurseries for the marine, I thought it of great importance to be able to prove, as I was then capable of doing, that more persons would be found dead in three slave-vessels from Bristol, in a given time, than in all the other vessels put together, numerous as they were, belonging to the same port.

I procured also an account of the exports and imports for the year 1786, by means of which I was enabled to judge of the comparative value of this and the other trades.

In pursuing my different objects, there was one, which, to my great vexation, I found it extremely difficult to attain. This was the procuring of any assurance from those, who had been personally acquainted with the horrors of this trade, that they would appear, if called upon, as evidence against it.

I persevered for weeks together, but could find no one of

all those, applied to, who would have any thing to say to me. At length, Walter Chandler had prevailed upon a young gentleman, of the name of Gardiner, who was going out as surgeon of the Pilgrim, to meet me. The condition was, that we were to meet at the house of the former, but that we were to enter in, and go out at different times, that is, we were not to be seen together.

Gardiner on being introduced to me, said at once, that he had often wished to see me on the subject of my errand, but that the owner of the Pilgrim had pointed me out to him as a person, whom he would wish him to avoid. He then laid open to me the different methods of obtaining slaves in Africa, as he had learned from those on board his own vessel in his first, or former, voyage. He unfolded also the manner of their treatment in the Middle Passage, with the various distressing scenes which had occurred in it. He stated the barbarous usage of the seamen, as he had witnessed it, and concluded by saying, that there never was a subject, which demanded so loudly the interference of the legislature, as that of the Slave-trade.

On reviewing the conversation which had passed between us after my return home, I thought, considering the friendly disposition of Gardiner towards us, I had not done all I could for the cause ; and, communicating my feelings to Walter Chandler, he procured me another interview. At this, I asked him, if he would become an evidence, if he lived to return ? He replied, very heartily, that he would. I then asked him, if he would keep a journal of facts during his voyage, as it would enable him to speak more correctly, in case he should be called upon for his testimony ? He assured me, he would, and that he would make up a little book for that purpose. I took my leave of him, entreating him to follow his resolutions of kindness both to the sailors and the slaves, and wished him a speedy and a safe return.

On going one day by the Exchange, after this interview with Gardiner, I overheard a young gentleman say to another, "that it happened on the Coast, last year, and that he saw it." I wished to know who he was, and to get at him if I could. I watched him at a distance for more than half an hour, when I saw him leave his companion. I followed him till he entered a house. I then considered whether it would be proper, and in what manner, to address him when he should come out of it. But I waited three hours, and did not see him. I then concluded that he either lodged where I saw him enter, or that he had gone to dine with some friend. I therefore took notice of the house, and, showing it afterwards to several of my friends, desired them to make him out for me. In a day or two I had an interview with him. His name was James Arnold. He had been two voyages to the coast of Africa for slaves; one as surgeon's mate in the *Alexander*, in the year 1785, and the other as surgeon in the *Little Pearl*, in the year 1786, from which he had not then very long returned.

I asked him if he was willing to give me any account of these voyages, for that I was making an inquiry into the nature of the Slave-trade. He replied, he knew that I was. He had been cautioned about falling in with me. He had, however, taken no pains to avoid me. It was a bad trade, and ought to be exposed.

I went over the same ground as I had gone with Gardiner, relative to the first of these voyages, or that in the *Alexander*. It is not necessary to detail the particulars. It is impossible, however, not to mention, that the treatment of the seamen on board this vessel, was worse than I had ever before heard of. No less than eleven of them, unable to bear their lives, had deserted at Bonny, on the coast of Africa, which is a most unusual thing, choosing all that

could be endured. though in a most inhospitable climate, and in the power of the natives, rather than to continue in their own ship. Nine others also, in addition to the loss of these, had died in the same voyage. As to the rest, he believed, without any exception, that they had been badly used.

I asked Mr. Arnold, if he was willing to give evidence of the facts he had related ? He said he had only one objection, which was, that in two or three days he was to go in the Ruby, on his third voyage : but on leaving me, he said that he would take an affidavit before the mayor, of the truth of any of those things which he had related to me, if that would do ; but, from motives of safety, he should not choose to do this, till within a few hours before he sailed.

In two or three days after this, he sent for me. He said the Ruby would leave King-road the next day, and that he was ready to do as he had promised. Depositions were accordingly made out from his own words. I went with him to the residence of George Daubeney, esquire, who was then chief magistrate of the city, and they were sworn to, in his presence, and witnessed as the law requires.

On taking my leave of him, I asked him how he could go a third time in such a barbarous employ ? He said he had been distressed. In his voyage in the Alexander, he had made nothing ; for he had been so ill used, that he had solicited his discharge in Grenada, where, being paid in currency, he had but little to receive. When he arrived in Bristol from that island, he was quite penniless ; and finding the Little Pearl going out, he was glad to get on board her as her surgeon, which he then did entirely for the sake of bread. He said, moreover, that she was but a small vessel, and that his savings had been but small in her. This occasioned him to apply for the Ruby, his present ship ; but if he survived this voyage, he would never go another. I then

put the same question to him as to Gardiner, and he promised to keep a journal of facts, and to give his evidence, if called upon, on his return.

The reader will see, from this account, the difficulty I had in procuring evidence from this port. The owners of vessels employed in the trade there, forbade all intercourse with me. The old captains, who had made their fortunes in it, would not see me. The young, who were making them, could not be supposed to espouse my cause, to the detriment of their own interest. Of those whose necessities made them go into it for a livelihood, I could not get one to come forward, without doing so much for him as would have amounted to bribery. Thus, when I got one of these into my possession, I was obliged to let him go again. I was, however, greatly consoled by the consideration, that I had procured two sentinels to be stationed in the enemy's camp, who keeping a journal of different facts, would bring me some important intelligence at a future period.

My friends at Bristol, procured for me an interview with Mr. Alexander Falconbridge, who had been to the coast of Africa, as a surgeon, for four voyages; one in the *Tartar*, another in the *Alexander*, and two in the *Emilia* slave-vessels.

On my introduction to him, I asked him if he had any objection to give me an account of the cruelties, which were said to be connected with the Slave trade? He answered, without any reserve, that he had not; for that he had now done with it. Never were any words more welcome to my ears than these. "Yes; I have done with the trade." And he said also, that he was free to give me information concerning it. Was he not then one of the very persons, whom I had so long been seeking, but in vain?

To detail the accounts which he gave me, at this and at subsequent interviews, relative to the different branches of this trade, would fill no ordinary volume. Suffice it to say in general terms, as far as relates to the slaves, that he confirmed the various violent and treacherous methods of procuring them in their own country ; their wretched condition, in consequence of being crowded together, in the passage ; their attempts to rise in defence of their own freedom, and when this was impracticable, to destroy themselves by the refusal of sustenance, by jumping overboard into the sea, and in other ways : the effect also of their situation upon their minds, by producing insanity, and various diseases and the cruel manner of disposing of them in the West-Indies, and of separating relatives and friends.

With respect to the seamen employed in this trade, he commended captain Frazer for his kind usage to them, under whom he had so long served. The handsome way in which he spoke of the latter, pleased me much, because he was willing to deduce from it his own impartiality, and because I thought I might infer from it also his regard to truth as to other parts of his narrative. Indeed I had been before acquainted with this circumstance. Thompson, of the *Seven Stars*, had informed me that Frazer was the only man sailing out of that port for slaves, who had not been guilty of cruelty to his seamen. Mr. Falconbridge, however stated, that though he had been thus fortunate in the *Tarta* and *Emilia*, he had been as unfortunate in the *Alexander* for he believed there were no instances upon naval record taken altogether, of greater barbarity, than of that which had been exercised towards the seamen in this voyage. Mr. Arnold, before mentioned, had been surgeon's mate under Mr. Falconbridge in this vessel.

There was one circumstance of peculiar importance, but

quite new to me, which I collected from the information which Mr. Falconbridge had given me. This was, that many of the seamen, who left the slave-ships in the West-Indies were in such a weak, ulcerated, and otherwise diseased state, that they perished there. Several also of those who came home with the vessels, were in the same deplorable condition. This was the case, Mr. Falconbridge said, with some who returned in the *Alexander*. It was the case also with many others ; for he had been a pupil, for twelve months, in the Bristol Infirmary, and had had ample means of knowing the fact. The greatest number of seamen, at almost all times, who were there, were from the Slave-vessels. These, too, were usually there on account of diseases, whereas those from other ships, were usually there on account of accidents. The health of some of the former was so far destroyed, that they were never wholly to be restored. This information was of great importance : for it showed that they who were reported dead upon the muster-rolls, were not all that were lost to the country by the prosecution of this wicked trade. Indeed, it was of so much importance, that in all my future interviews with others, which were for the purpose of collecting evidence, I never forgot to make it a subject of inquiry.

I can hardly say how precious I considered the facts with which Mr. Falconbridge had furnished me from his own experience, relative to the different branches of this commerce. They were so precious, that I began now to be troubled lest I should lose them. For, though he had thus privately unbosomed himself to me, it did not follow that he would come forward as a public evidence. I was not a little uneasy on this account, and I delayed asking him for many days. During this time, however, I frequently visited him ; and at length, when I thought I was better acquainted, and prob-

ably in some little estimation with him, I ventured to open my wishes on the subject. He answered me boldly, and at once, that he had left the trade upon principle, and that he would state all he knew concerning it, either publicly or privately, and at any time when he should be called upon to do it. This answer produced such an effect upon me, after all my former disappointments, that I felt it all over my frame. It operated like a sudden shock, which often disables the impressed person for a time. So the joy I felt, rendered me quite useless, as to business, for the remainder of the day.

The different scenes of barbarity, which came to my knowledge at this place, greatly afflicted my mind. My feelings became almost insupportable. I was agonized to think that this trade should last another day. I was in a state of agitation from morning till night. I determined I would soon leave Bristol. I saw nothing but misery in the place. I had collected now, I believed, all the evidence it would afford; and to stay in it a day longer than was necessary, would be only an interruption for so much time both of my happiness and of my health. I determined therefore to do only two or three things, which I thought to be proper, and to depart in a few days.

And first I went to Bath, where I endeavoured to secure the respectable paper belonging to that city in favour of the abolition of the Slave-trade. This I did entirely to my satisfaction, by relating to the worthy editor all the discoveries I had made, and by impressing his mind in a forcible manner on the subject.

The next attempt was to lay the foundation of a committee in Bristol, and of a petition to Parliament from it for the abolition of the Slave-trade. I had now made many friends, and I had the pleasure of seeing that my wishes were *likely in a short time to be gratified in both these cases.*

It was now necessary, that I should write to the committee in London. I informed them of all my discoveries in the various branches to which my attention had been directed, and desired them in return to procure me various official documents for the port of London, which I then specified. Having done this, I conferred with Mr. Falconbridge, relative to being with me at Liverpool. I thought it right to make him no other offer than that his expenses should be paid. He acceded to my request on these disinterested terms; and I took my departure from Bristol, leaving him to follow me in a few days.

## SECTION III.

My first introduction at Liverpool, was to William Rathbone, a member of the religious society of the Quakers. He was the same person, who, before the formation of our committee, had procured me copies of several of the muster-rolls of the Slave vessels belonging to that port, so that, though we were not personally known, yet we were not strangers to each other. Isaac Hadwen, a respectable member of the same society, was the person whom I saw next. As Mr. Roscoe had generously given the profits of "The Wrongs of Africa," to our committee, I made no scruple of calling upon him. His reception of me was very friendly, and he introduced me afterwards to Dr. Currie, who had written the preface to that poem. There was also a fourth, upon whom I called, though I did not know him. His name was Edward Rushton. He had been an officer in a Slave ship, but had lost his sight, and had become an enemy to that trade. These were the only persons whom I knew for some time after my arrival in that place.

In my attempts to add to my collection of specimens of

African produce, I was favoured with a sample of gum rubber astringens, of cotton from the Gambia, of indigo and musk, of long pepper, of black pepper from Whidah, of mahogany from Calabar, and of cloths of different colours, made by the natives, which, while they gave other proofs of the quality of their own cotton, gave proofs, also, of the variety of their dyes.

I made interest at the Custom-house for various exports and imports, and for copies of the muster-rolls of several slave-vessels, besides those of vessels employed in other trades.

By looking out constantly for information on this great subject, I was led to the examination of a printed card or table of the dock-duties of Liverpool, which was published annually. The town of Liverpool had so risen in opulence and importance, from only a fishing village, that the corporation seemed to have a pride in giving a public view of this increase. Hence they published and circulated this card. Now the card contained one, among other facts, which was almost as precious, in a political point of view, as any I had yet obtained. It stated, that in the year 1772, when I knew that a hundred vessels sailed out of Liverpool for the coast of Africa, the dock-duties amounted to 455*l.* and that in 1779, when I knew that in consequence of the war, only eleven went from thence to the same coast, they amounted to 495*l.* From these facts, put together, two conclusions were obvious. The first was, that the opulence of Liverpool, as far as the entry of vessels into its ports, and the dock-duties arising from thence, were concerned, was not indebted to the Slave-trade; for these duties were highest when it had only eleven ships in that employ. The second was, that there had been almost a practical experiment with respect to the abolition of it; for the vessels in it had

been gradually reduced from one hundred to eleven, and yet the West-Indians had not complained of their ruin, nor had the merchants or manufacturers suffered, nor had Liverpool been affected by the change.

My friend William Rathbone, who had been looking out to supply me with intelligence, but who was desirous that I should not be imposed upon, and that I should get it from the fountain-head, introduced me to Mr. Norris for this purpose. Norris had been formerly a slave-captain, but had quitted the trade, and settled as a merchant in a different line of business. He was a man of quick penetration, and of good talents, which he had cultivated to advantage, and he had a pleasing address, both as to speech and manners. He received me with great politeness, and offered me all the information I desired. I was with him five or six times at his own house for this purpose. The substance of his communications on these occasions, I shall now put down, and I beg the reader's particular attention to it, as he will be referred to it in other parts of this work.

With respect to the produce of Africa, Mr. Norris enumerated many articles, in which a new and valuable trade might be opened, of which he gave me one, namely, the black pepper from Whidah. This he gave me, to use his own expressions, as one argument among many others of the impolicy of the Slave-trade, which, by turning the attention of the inhabitants to the persons of one another for sale, hindered foreigners from discovering, and themselves from cultivating, many of the valuable productions of their own soil.

On the subject of procuring slaves, he gave it as his decided opinion, that many of the inhabitants of Africa were kidnapped by each other, as they were travelling on the roads, or fishing in the creeks, or cultivating their little

spots. Having learned their language, he had collected the fact from various quarters, but more particularly from the accounts of slaves, whom he had transported in his own vessels. With respect however, to Whidah, many came from thence, who were reduced to slavery in a different manner. The king of Dahomey, whose life, with the wars and customs of the Dahomans, he said he was then writing, and who was a very despotic prince, made no scruple of seizing his own subjects, and of selling them, if he were in want of any of the articles which the slave-vessels would afford him. The history of this prince's life, he lent me afterwards to read, while it was yet in manuscript, in which I observed that he had recorded all the facts now mentioned.

With respect to the Slave-trade, as it affected the health of our seamen, Mr. Norris admitted it to be destructive. But I did not stand in need of this information, as I knew this part of the subject, in consequence of my familiarity with the muster-rolls, better than himself.

He admitted it also to be true, that they were too frequently ill-treated in this trade.

At the last interview we had, he seemed to be so satisfied of the inhumanity, injustice, and impolicy of the trade, that he made me a voluntary offer of certain clauses, which he had been thinking of, and which, he believed, if put into an act of parliament, would judiciously effect its abolition. The offer of these clauses, I embraced eagerly. He dictated them, and I wrote. I wrote them in a small book which I had then in my pocket.

Such then were the services, which Mr. Norris, at the request of William Rathbone, rendered me at Liverpool, during my stay there.

The history of the seamen employed in the slave-vessels

belonging to the port of Liverpool, I found to be similar to that of those from Bristol.

They who went into this trade, were of two classes. The first consisted of those who were ignorant of it, and to whom generally, improper representations of advantage had been made, for the purpose of enticing them into it. The second consisted of those, who, by means of a regular system, kept up by the mates and captains, had been purposely brought by their landlords into distress, from which they could only be extricated by going into this hateful employ. How many have I seen, with tears in their eyes, put into boats, and conveyed to vessels, which were then lying at the Black Rock, and which were only waiting to receive them to sail away !

The manner of paying them in the currency of the Islands was the same as at Bristol. But this practice was not concealed at Liverpool, as it was at the former place. The articles of agreement were printed, so that all, who chose to buy, might read them. At the same time it must be observed, that seamen were never paid in this manner in any other employ ; and that the African wages, though nominally higher for the sake of procuring hands, were thus made to be actually lower than in other trades.

With respect to their treatment, nothing could be worse. It seemed to me to be but one barbarous system from the beginning to the end. I do not say barbarous, as if premeditated, but it became so in consequence of the savage habits gradually formed by a familiarity with miserable sights, and with a course of action inseparable from the trade. Men in their first voyages usually disliked the traffic ; and, if they were happy enough then to abandon it, they usually escaped the disease of a hardened heart. But if they went a second and a third time, their disposition became gradually changed. It was impossible for them to be

accustomed to carry away men and women by force, to keep them in chains, to see their tears, to hear their mournful lamentations, to behold the dead and the dying, to be obliged to keep up a system of severity amidst all this affliction; in short, it was impossible for them to be witnesses, and this for successive voyages, to the complicated mass of misery passing in a slave-ship, without losing their finer feelings, or without contracting those habits of moroseness and cruelty, which would brutalize their nature. Now, if we consider that persons could not easily become captains (and to these the barbarities were generally chargeable by actual perpetration, or by consent) till they had been two or three voyages in this employ, we shall see the reason why it would be almost a miracle, if they, who were thus employed in it, were not rather to become monsters, than to continue to be men.

It is impossible, if I observe the bounds I have prescribed myself, that I should lay open the numerous cases, which came before me at Liverpool, relative to the ill treatment of the seamen in this wicked trade. It may be sufficient to say, that they harrassed my constitution, and affected my spirits daily. They were in my thoughts on my pillow after I retired to rest, and I found them before my eyes when I awoke. Afflicting however, as they were, they were of great use in the promotion of our cause. For they served, whatever else failed, as a stimulus to perpetual energy. They made me think light of former labours, and they urged me imperiously to new.

The temper of many of the interested people of Liverpool, had become very irritable, and their hostility was apparent on many occasions. I received anonymous letters, entreating me to leave it, or I should otherwise never leave it alive. The only effect, which this advice had upon me,

was to make me more vigilant, when I went out at night. I never stirred out at this time, without Mr Falconbridge ; and he never accompanied me without being well armed. Of this, however, I knew nothing until we had left the place.

Finding that I could get no further evidence ; that the information which I had already obtained, was considerable ;\* and that the committee had expressed an earnest desire, in a letter which I had received, that I would take into consideration the propriety of writing my "Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave-Trade," as soon as possible, I determined upon leaving Liverpool. I went round accordingly, and took leave of my friends. The last of these was William Rathbone ; and I have to regret, that it was also the last time I ever saw him. Independently of the gratitude I owed him for assisting me in this great cause, I respected him highly as a man. He possessed a fine understanding, with a solid judgment. In his own line of trade, which was that of a timber-merchant, on an extensive scale, he would not allow any article to be sold for the use of a slave-ship, and he always refused those, who applied to him for materials for such purposes.

I now took my departure from Liverpool, and proceeded to Manchester, where I arrived on Friday evening. On Saturday morning, Mr. Thomas Walker, attended by Mr. Cooper and Mr. Bayley, of Hope, called upon me. They were then strangers to me. They came, they said, having heard of my arrival, to congratulate me on the spi-



\* In London, Bristol and Liverpool, I had already obtained the names of more than 20,000 seamen, in different voyages, knowing what had become of each.

rit which was then beginning to show itself, among the people of Manchester, and of other places, on the subject of the Slave trade, and which would unquestionably manifest itself further, by breaking out into petitions to parliament for its abolition. I was much surprised at this information. I had devoted myself so entirely to my object, that I had never had time to read a newspaper since I left London. I never knew therefore, till now, that the attention of the public had been drawn to the subject in such a manner. And as to petitions, though I myself had suggested the idea at Bridgewater, Bristol, Gloucester, and two or three other places, I had only done it provisionally, and this without either the knowledge or the consent of the committee. The news, however, as it astonished, so it almost overpowered me with joy. I rejoiced in it, because it was a proof of the general good disposition of my countrymen; because it showed me, that the cause was such as needed only to be known, to be patronised; and because the manifestation of this spirit seemed to me to be an earnest, that success would ultimately follow.

From Manchester, I proceed to Keddleston in Derbyshire, to spend a day with lord Searsdale, and to show him my little collection of African productions, and to inform him of my progress since I last saw him. Here a letter was forwarded to me from the reverend John Toogood, of Keinton Magna, in Dorsetshire, though I was then unknown to him. He informed me that he had addressed several letters to the inhabitants of his own county, through their provincial paper, on the subject of the Slave-trade, which letters had produced a considerable effect. It appeared, however, that, when he began them, he did not know of the formation of our committee, or that he had a single coadjutor in the cause.

From Keddleston, I turned off to Birmingham. I was introduced by letter, at Birmingham, to Sampson and Charles Lloyd, the brothers of John Lloyd, belonging to our committee, and members of the religious society of the Quakers. I was highly gratified in finding that these, in conjunction with Mr. Russell, had been attempting to awaken the attention of the inhabitants to this great subject, and that in consequence of their laudable efforts, a spirit was beginning to show itself there, as at Manchester, in favour of the abolition of the Slave-trade. The kind manner in which these received me, and the deep interest which they appeared to take in our cause, led me to an esteem for them, which, by means of subsequent visits, grew into a solid friendship.

At length, I reached London, when I attended a sitting of the committee, after an absence of more than five months. At this sitting it was strongly recommended to me to publish a second edition of my "*Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*," and to insert such of the facts in it, in their proper places, out of those collected in my late travels, as I might judge to be productive of an interesting effect. There appeared also an earnest desire in the committee, that, directly after this, I should begin my "*Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave-trade*."

In compliance with their wishes, I determined upon both of these works. But I resolved to retire into the country, that, by being subject to less interruption there, I might the sooner finish them.

## CHAPTER III.

*Proceedings of the Committee, and the Introduction of the  
Question into the House of Commons.*

## SECTION I.

THE committee during my absence on my journey, had attended regularly at their posts. They had been both vigilant and industrious. They were, in short, the persons who had been the means of raising the public spirit, which I had observed first at Manchester, and afterwards as I journeyed on. It will be proper, therefore, that I should now say something of their labours, and of the fruits of them.

The committee dispersed 500 copies of their circular letter, giving an account of their institution, in London, and its neighbourhood, and the Quakers were the first to notice it. This they did in their yearly epistle, of which the following is an extract: " We have also thankfully to believe there is a growing attention in many, not of our religious Society, to the subject of Negro slavery: and that the minds of the people are more and more enlarged, to consider it as an aggregate of every species of evil, and to see the utter inconsistency of upholding it, by the authority of any nation whatever, especially of such as punish, with loss of life, crimes whose magnitude bears scarce any proportion to this complicated iniquity."

The General Baptists were the next ; for on the twenty-second of June, Stephen Lowdell and Dan Taylor, attended as a deputation from the annual meeting of that religious body, to inform the committee, that those, whom they represented, approved their proceedings, and that they would countenance the object of their institution.

The first individual, who addressed the committee, was Mr. William Smith, the present member for Norwich. In his letter he expressed the pleasure he had received in finding persons associated in the support of a cause, in which he himself had taken a deep interest. He gave them advice as to their future plans. He promised them all the co-operation in his power : and he exhorted them not to despair, even if their first attempt should be unsuccessful ; “ for consolation,” says he, “ will not be wanting. You may rest satisfied that the attempt will be productive of some good ; that the fervent wishes of the righteous will be on your side, and that the blessing of those who are ready to perish, will fall upon you.” And as Mr. Smith was the first person to address the committee as an individual after its formation, so, next to Mr. Wilberforce and the members of it, he gave the most time and attention to the promotion of the cause.

On the fifth of July, 1787, the committee opened a correspondence, by means of William Dillwyn, with the societies of Philadelphia and New-York, of whose institution an account has been given. At this sitting, a due sense was signified of the services of Mr. Ramsay, and a desire of his friendly communications when convenient.

The two next meetings were principally occupied in making out lists of the names of persons in the country, to whom the committee should send their publications for distribution. For this purpose, every member was to bring in an account of those whom he knew personally, and whom he

believed not only to be willing, but qualified, on account of their judgment, and the weight of their character, to take an useful part in the work, which was to be assigned to them. It is a remarkable circumstance, that, when the lists were arranged, the committee, few as they were, found they had friends in no less than thirty-nine counties,\* in each of which there were several, so that a knowledge of their institution could now be soon diffusively spread.

The committee, having now fixed upon their correspondents, ordered five hundred copies of the circular letter, which has been before mentioned. and five thousand of the Summary Views, an account of which has been given, also to be printed.

On the twenty-seventh of August, the new correspondents began to make their appearance. This sitting was distinguished by the receipt of letters from two celebrated persons. The first was from Brissot, dated Paris, August the eighteenth, who, it may be recollected, was an active member of the National Convention of France, and who suffered in the persecution of Robespierre. The second was from Mr. John Wesley, whose useful labours, as a minister of the gospel, are so well known to our countrymen.

Brissot, in this letter, congratulated the members of the committee, on having come together for so laudable an object. He offered his own assistance towards the promotion of it. He desired that his valuable friend Claviere,



\* The Quakers, by means of their discipline, have a greater personal knowledge of each other, than the members of any other religious society. But two-thirds of the committee were Quakers, and hence the circumstance is explained. Hence also nine-tenths of our first coadjutors were Quakers.

suffered also, under Robespierre, might be joined to and that both might be acknowledged by the committee as associates in what he called this heavenly work.

His thanks of the committee were voted to Brissot, for his interested offer of his services, and he was elected an honorary and corresponding member.

Mr. Wesley, whose letter was read next, informed the committee of the great satisfaction which he also had expressed, when he heard of their formation. He conceived that their design, while it would destroy the Slave-trade, would also strike at the root of the shocking abomination of slavery. He desired to forewarn them, that they must expect difficulties and great opposition from those who were vested in the system; that these were a powerful body; and that they would raise all their forces, when they perceived their craft to be in danger. They would employ able writers, who would have neither justice nor mercy. The committee were not to be dismayed by such treatment, nor even if some of those, who professed good will did them, should turn against them. He concluded in words: "I commend you to Him, who is able to carry through all opposition, and support you under all disagements."

On the fourth, eleventh, and eighteenth of September, the committee were employed variously. Among other things, they voted their thanks to Mr. Leigh, a clergyman of the established church, for the offer of his services for the county of Norfolk. They ordered also one thousand copies of the regular letter to be additionally printed.

At one of these meetings, a resolution was made, that William Sharp, esquire, be appointed chairman.

On the second and sixteenth of October, two sittings took

place ; at the latter of which a sub-committee, which had been appointed for the purpose, brought in a design for a seal. An African was seen (as in the figure\*) in a supplicating posture, kneeling with one knee upon the ground, and with both his hands lifted up to Heaven.



round the seal was observed the following motto, which he was uttering the words himself, "Am I not a Man Brother?" The design having been approved of, was ordered to be engraved from it. I may mention that this seal, simple as the design was, was made to tribute largely, as will be shown in its proper place, to turning the attention of our countrymen to the case of the injured Africans, and of procuring a warm interest in their favour.

On the thirtieth of October, a letter was received, read, from Robert Boucher Nickolls, dean of Midhurst in Yorkshire. In this he stated, that he was a native of the West-Indies, and had travelled on the continent of America. He then offered some important information.

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\* The figure is rather larger than that in the seal.

to the committee, as his mite towards the abolition of the Slave-trade, and as an encouragement to them to persevere. He attempted to prove, that the natural increase of the Negroes, already in the West Indian islands, would be fully adequate to the cultivation of them, without any fresh supplies from Africa, and that such natural increase would be secured by humane treatment. With this view, he instanced the two estates of Mr. Mac Mahon, and of Dr. Mapp, in the island of Barbadoes. The first required continual supplies of new slaves, in consequence of the severe and cruel usage adopted upon it. The latter overflowed with labourers, in consequence of a system of kindness, so that it almost peopled another estate. Having related these instances, he cited others in North America, where, though the climate was less favourable to the constitution of the Africans, but their treatment better, they increased also.

This letter of the Dean of Middleham, which was a little Essay of itself, was deemed of so much importance by the committee, but particularly as it was the result of local knowledge, that they not only passed a resolution of thanks to him for it, but desired his permission to print it.

The committee sat again on the thirteenth and twenty-second of November. At the first of these sittings, a letter was read from Henry Grimston, esquire, of Whitwell-Hall, near York, offering his services for the promotion of the cause in his own county. At the second, the Dean of Middleham's answer was received. He acquiesced in the request of the committee; when five thousand of his letters were ordered immediately to be printed.

The labours of the committee, during my absence, were as I have now explained them; but as I was obliged, almost immediately on joining them, to retire into the country to begin my new work, I must give an account of their further

services, till I joined them again, or till the middle of February, 1788.

During sittings which were held from the middle of December, 1787, to the eighteenth of January, 1788, the business of the committee had so increased, that it was found proper to make an addition to their number. Accordingly James Martin and William Morton Pitt, esquires, members of parliament, and Robert Hunter, and Joseph Smith, esquires, were chosen members of it.

The knowledge also of the institution of the society, had spread to such an extent, and the eagerness among individuals to see the publications of the committee, had been so great, that the press was kept almost constantly going during the time now mentioned. No fewer than three thousand lists of the subscribers, with a circular letter prefixed to them, explaining the object of the institution, were ordered to be printed within this period, to which are to be added fifteen hundred of Benezet's Account of Guinea, three thousand of the Dean of Middleham's Letters, five thousand Summary Views, and two thousand of a new edition of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, which I had enlarged before the last of these sittings, from materials collected in my late tour.

The thanks of the committee were voted, during this period, to Mr. Alexander Falconbridge, for the assistance he had given me in my inquiries into the nature of the Slave-trade.

As Mr. Falconbridge had but lately returned from Africa, and as facts and circumstances, which had taken place but a little time ago, were less liable to objections inasmuch as they proved the present state of things, than those which had happened in earlier times, he was prevailed upon to

write an account of what he had seen during the four voyages he had made to the continent ; and accordingly, within the period which has been mentioned, he began his work.

A letter was received within this period, from the society established at Philadelphia, accompanied with documents in proof of the good effects of the manumission of slaves, and with specimens of writing and drawing by the same. In this letter the society congratulated the committee in London on its formation, and professed its readiness to co-operate in any way in which it could be made useful.

The committee thought it right to make a report to the public, relative to the state and progress of their cause ; but as this was composed chiefly from materials, which the reader has now in his possession, it may not be necessary to produce it.

On the twenty-second and twenty-ninth of January, and on the fifth and twelfth of February, 1788, sittings were also held. During these, the business still increasing, John Maitland, esquire, was elected a member of the committee.

As the correspondents of the committee were now numerous, and as these solicited publications for the use of those who applied to them, as well as of those to whom they wished to give a knowledge of the subject, the press was kept in constant employ during this period also. Five thousand two hundred and fifty additional reports were ordered to be printed, and also three thousand of Falconbridge's Account of the Slave-trade, the manuscript of which was now finished. At this time, Mr. Newton, rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London, who had been in his youth to the coast of Africa, but who had now become a serious and useful divine, felt it his duty to write his Thoughts on the African Slave-trade. The committee, having obtained permission, printed three thousand copies of these also.

During these sittings, the chairman was requested to have frequent communication with Dr. Porteus, bishop of London, as he had expressed his desire of becoming useful to the institution.

A circular letter also, with the report before mentioned, was ordered to be sent to the mayors of several corporate towns.

A communication was made to the committee, at one of their sittings, through the medium of the Chevalier de Ternant, from the celebrated Marquis de la Fayette of France. The marquis signified the singular pleasure he had received on hearing of the formation of a committee in England, for the abolition of the Slave-trade, and the earnest desire he had to promote the object of it. With this view, he informed the committee, that he should attempt the formation of a similar society in France. This he conceived to be one of the most effectual measures he could devise, for securing the object in question; for he was of opinion, that if the two great nations of France and England, were to unite in this humane and christian work, the other European nations might be induced to follow the example.

The committee, on receiving the last communication, resolved, that the chairman should return their thanks to the Marquis de la Fayette, and the Chevalier de Ternant, and that he should inform them, that they were enrolled among the honorary and corresponding members of the Society.

The others letters read during these sittings, were to convey information to the committee, that people in various parts of the kingdom, had then felt themselves so deeply interested in behalf of the injured Africans, that they had determined either on public meetings, or had come to resolutions, or had it in contemplation to petition parliament, for the abolition of the Slave-trade.

## SECTION II.

By this time the nature of the Slave trade had, in consequence of the labours of the committee, and of their several correspondents, become generally known throughout the kingdom. It had excited a general attention, and there was among people a general feeling in behalf of the wrongs of Africa. This feeling had also, as may be collected from what has been already mentioned, broken out into language; for not only had the traffic become the general subject of conversation, but public meetings had taken place, in which it had been discussed, and of which the result was, that an application to parliament had been resolved upon in many places concerning it. By the middle of February, 1788, no fewer than thirty-five petitions had been delivered to the commons, and it was known that others were on their way to the same house.

This ferment in the public mind, which had shown itself in the public prints, even before the petitions had been resolved upon, had excited the attention of government. To coincide with the wishes of the people on this subject, appeared to those in authority to be a desirable thing. To abolish the trade, replete as it was with misery, was desirable also : but it was so connected with the interest of individuals, and so interwoven with the commerce and revenue of the country, that a hasty abolition of it, without a previous inquiry, appeared to them to be likely to be productive of as much misery as good. The king, therefore, by an order of council, dated February the eleventh, 1788, directed that a committee of privy council should sit as a board of trade, “to take into their consideration the present state of the African trade, particularly as far as related to the prac-

tice and manner of purchasing or obtaining slaves on the coast of Africa, and the importation and sale thereof, either in the British colonies and settlements, or in the foreign colonies and settlements in America or the West-Indies; and also as far as related to the effects and consequences of the trade, both in Africa, and in the said colonies and settlements, and to the general commerce of this kingdom; and that they should report to him in council, the result of their inquiries, with such observations as they might have to offer thereupon."

Of this order of council, Mr. Wilberforce, who had attended to this great subject, as far as his health would permit, since I left him, had received notice; but he was then too ill himself to take any measures concerning it. He therefore wrote to me, and begged of me to repair to London immediately, in order to get such evidence ready, as we might think it eligible to introduce when the council sat. At that time, I had finished the additions to my *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, and I had now proceeded about half way in that of the *Impolicy* of it. This summons, however, I obeyed, and returned to town on the fourteenth of February, from which day, to the twenty-fourth of May, I shall now give the history of our proceedings.

My first business in London, was to hold a conversation with Mr. Pitt, previously to the meeting of the council, and to try to interest him, as the first minister of state, in our favour. For this purpose, Mr. Wilberforce had opened the way for me, and an interview took place. We were in free conversation together for a considerable time, during which we went through most of the branches of the subject. Mr. Pitt appeared to me to have but little knowledge of it. He had also his doubts, which he expressed openly, on many

points. He was at a loss to conceive how private interest should not always restrain the master of the slave from abusing him. This matter I explained to him as well as I could; and if he was not entirely satisfied with my interpretation of it, he was at least induced to believe that cruel practices were more probable than he had imagined. A second circumstance, the truth of which he doubted, was the mortality and usage of seamen in this trade; and a third was the statement, by which so much had been made of the riches of Africa, and of the genius and abilities of her people; for he seemed at a loss to comprehend, if these things were so, how it had happened that they should not have been more generally noticed before. I promised to satisfy him upon these points, and an interview was fixed for this purpose the next day.

At the time appointed, I went with my books, papers, and African productions. Mr. Pitt examined the former himself. He turned over leaf after leaf, in which the copies of the muster-rolls were contained, with great patience; and when he had looked over above a hundred pages accurately, and found the name of every seaman inserted, his former abode or service, the time of his entry, and what had become of him, either by death, discharge or desertion, he expressed his surprise at the great pains which had been taken in this branch of the inquiry, and confessed, with some emotion, that his doubts were wholly removed with respect to the destructive nature of this employ; and he said, moreover, that the facts contained in these documents, if they had been but fairly copied, could never be disproved. He was equally astonished at the various woods and other productions of Africa, but most of all, at the manufactures of the natives in cotton, leather, gold, and iron, which were laid before him. These he handled and examined over and over again.

Many sublime thoughts seemed to rush in upon once, at the sight of these, some of which he exp with observations becoming a great and dignified mine thanked me for the light I had given him on many branches of this great question; and I went away a certain conviction, that I had left him much improve our favour.

My next visit was to Mr. (now lord) Grenville. I upon him at the request of Mr. Wilberforce, who h previously written to him from Bath, as he had promised the meetings of the privy council, during the extensions which were to take place. I found in the course of our conversation, that Mr. Grenville had not the same knowledge of the subject, than Mr. Pitt, but I found him differently circumstanced in other respects; for I perceived in him a warm feeling in behalf of the injured Africa that he had no doubt of the possibility of all the objections, which had been alledged against this traffic. I shewed him all my papers, and some of my natural productions, which he examined. I was with him the next day once again afterwards, so that the subject was considered all its parts.

A report having gone abroad, that the committee of the privy council would only examine those who were interested in the continuance of the trade, I found it necessary to shew upon Mr. Pitt again, and to inform him of it, when I obtained an assurance that every person, whom I chose to bring before the council, in behalf of the committee, should be heard. This gave rise to a conversation relative to those witnesses whom we had to produce on the side of the abolition. Here I was obliged to disclose our weakness in this respect. I owned with sorrow, that, though I had obtained many private and official documents in abundance, to prove

important points, yet I had found it difficult to prevail upon persons to be publicly examined on this subject. The only persons, we could then count upon, were Mr. Ramsay, Mr. H. Gandy, Mr. Falconbridge, Mr. Newton, and the Deau of Middleham. There was one, however, who would be a host of himself, if we could but gain him. I then mentioned Mr. Norris. I told Mr. Pitt the nature\* and value of the testimony which he had given me at Liverpool, and the great zeal he had discovered to serve the cause. Upon enquiry, I found that Mr. Norris was then in London. Upon this I tried to find him out, to entreat him to consent to an examination before the council. At length I found his address; but before I could see him, I was told by the Bishop of London, that he had came up as a Liverpool delegate, in support of the Slave-trade. Astonished at this information, I called upon him, to ask him to explain the reasons of his conduct, but he was out. He sent me, however, a letter soon afterwards, which was full of flattery, and in which, after having paid many high compliments to the general force of my arguments, and the justice and humanity of my sentiments on this great question, which had made a deep impression upon his mind, he had found occasion to differ from me, since we had last parted, on particular points, and that he had therefore less reluctantly yielded to the call of becoming a delegate; though notwithstanding, he would gladly have declined the office, if he could have done it with propriety.

At length the council began their examinations. Mr. Norris, lieutenant Matthews, of the navy, who had just left a slave-employ in Africa, and Mr. James Penny, formerly a



\* See his evidence, Chapter II, Section 3.

slave-captain, and then interested as a merchant in the trade, which three were the delegates from Liverpool, took possession of the ground first. Mr. Miles, Mr. Weuves, and others, followed them on the same side. The evidence which they gave, as previously concerted between themselves, may be shortly represented thus: They denied that kidnapping either did or could take place in Africa, or that wars were made there, for the purpose of procuring slaves. Having done away these wicked practices from their system, they maintained positions which were less exceptionable. or that the natives of Africa, generally, became slaves in consequence of having been made prisoners in just wars, or in consequence of their various crimes. They then gave a melancholy picture of the despotism and barbarity of some of the African princes, among whom the custom of sacrificing their own subjects prevailed. But of all others, that which was offered by Mr. Norris, on this ground, was the most frightful. The king of Dahomey, he said, sported with the lives of his people, in the most wanton manner. He had seen at the gates of his palace, two piles of heads like those of shot in an arsenal. Within the palace, the heads of persons newly put to death, were strewed at the distance of a few yards, in the passage which led to his apartment. This custom of human sacrifice, by the king of Dahomey, was not on one occasion only, but on many; such as on the reception of messengers from neighbouring states, or of white merchants, or on days of ceremonial. But the great carnage was once a year, when the poll tax was paid by his subjects. A thousand persons at least, were sacrificed annually on these different occasions. The great men, too, of the country, cut off a few heads on Festival days. From all these particulars, the humanity of the Slave-Trade was inferred, because it took away the inhab-

itants of Africa, into lands where no such barbarities were known. But the humanity of it, was insisted upon by positive circumstances also, namely, that a great number of the slaves were prisoners of war, and that in former times, all such were put to death, whereas now they were saved; so that there was a great accession of happiness to Africa, since the introduction of the Trade.

These statements, and those of others on the same side of the question, had a great effect, as may easily be conceived, upon the feelings of those of the council who were present. Some of them began immediately to be prejudiced against us. There were others, who even thought that it was almost unnecessary to proceed in the inquiry, for that the Trade was actually a blessing. They had little doubt that all our assertions concerning it, would be found false. The bishop of London, himself, was so impressed by these unexpected accounts, that he asked me if Mr. Falconbridge, whose pamphlet had been previously sent by the committee to every member of the council, was worthy of belief, and if he would substantiate publicly what he had thus written? But these impressions, unfortunately, were not confined to those who had been present at the examinations. These could not help communicating them to others. Hence, in all the higher circles, some of which I sometimes used to frequent, I had the mortification to hear of nothing but the Liverpool evidence, of our own credulity, and of the impositions which had been practised upon us: of these reports, the planters and merchants did not fail to avail themselves. They boasted that they would soon do away all the idle tales which had been invented against them. They desired the public only to suspend their judgment, till the privy council-report should be out, when they would see the folly and wickedness of all our allegations. A little more evi-

dence, and all would be over. On the twenty-second of March, though the committee of council had not then held its sittings more than a month, and these only twice or thrice a week, the following paragraph was seen in a morning paper: "The report of the committee of privy council, will be ready in a few days. After due examination, it appears that the major part of the complaints against this Trade, are ill-founded. Some regulations, however, are expected to take place, which may serve, in a certain degree, to appease the cause of humanity."

Thus the current of opinion, in particular circles, ran against us for the first month, and so strong, that it was impossible for us to stem it at once: but as some of the council recovered from their panic, and their good sense became less biassed by their feelings, and they were in a state to hear reason, their prejudices began to subside. It began now to be understood among them, that almost all the witnesses were concerned in the continuance of the Trade. It began to be known also, (for Mr. Pitt and the Bishop of London, took care that it should be circulated,) that Mr. Norris had, but a short time before, furnished me at Liverpool with information, all of which he had concealed\* from the council, but all of which made for the abolition of it. Mr. Devaynes also, a respectable member of parliament, who had been in Africa, and who had been appealed to by Mr. Norris, when examined before the privy council, in behalf of his extraordinary facts, was unable,



\* This was also the case with another witness, Mr. Weuves. He had given me accounts, before any stir was made about the Slave-trade, relative to it, all of which he kept back, when he was examined there.

when summoned, to confirm them to the desired extent. From this evidence, the council collected, that human sacrifices were not made on the arrival of White traders, as had been asserted; that there was no poll-tax in Dahomey at all; and that Mr. Norris must have been mistaken on these points, for he must have been there at the time of the ceremony of watering the graves, when about sixty persons suffered. This latter custom, moreover, appeared to have been a religious superstition of the country, such as at Otaheite, or in Britain, in the time of the Druids, and to have had nothing to do with the Slave-trade.\* But, besides these draw-backs, from the weight of the testimony which had been given, it began to be perceived by some of the lords of the council, that the cruel superstitions which had been described, obtained only in one or two countries in Africa, and these of insignificant extent; whereas at the time, when their minds were carried away, as it were by their feelings, they had supposed them to attach to the whole of that vast continent.

These considerations had the effect of diminishing the prejudices of some of the council on this great question: and when this was perceived to be the case, it was the opinion of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Grenville, and the Bishop of London, that we should send three or four of our own evidences for examination, who might help to restore matters to an equilibrium. Accordingly, Mr. Falconbridge, and some others, all of whom were to speak to the African part of the subject, were introduced. These produced a certain weight in

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\* Being a religious custom, it would still have gone on, though the Slave-trade had been abolished: nor could the merchants at any time, have bought off a single victim.

the opposite scale. But soon after these had been examined. Dr Andrew Spaarman, professor of physic, and inspector of the museum of the royal academy at Stockholm, and his companion, C. B. Wadstrom, chief director of the assay-office there, arrived in England. These gentlemen had been lately sent to Africa, by the late king of Sweden, to make discoveries in botany, mineralogy, and other departments of science. It so happened, that by means of George Harrison, one of our committee, I fell in, unexpectedly, with these gentlemen. I had not long been with them, before I perceived the great treasure I had found. They gave me many beautiful specimens of African produce. They showed me their journals, which they had regularly kept from day to day. I was anxious, therefore, to take them before the committee of council, to which they were pleased to consent; and, as Dr. Spaarman was to leave London in a few days, I procured him an introduction first. His evidence went to show, that the natives of Africa lived in a fruitful and luxuriant country, which supplied all their wants, and that they would be a happy people, if it were not for the existence of the Slave-trade. He instanced wars, which he knew to have been made by the Moors upon the Negroes, for they were entered upon wholly at the instigation of the White traders, for the purpose of getting slaves, and he had the pain of seeing the unhappy captives brought in on such occasions, and some of them in a wounded state. Among them were many women and children, and the women were in great affliction. He saw also the king of Barbessin send out his parties on expeditions of a similar kind, and he saw them return with slaves. The king had been made intoxicated on purpose, by the French agents or he would never have consented to the measure. He stated also, that in consequence of the temptations held

out by slave-vessels coming upon the coast, the natives seized one another in the night, when they found opportunity; and even invited others to their houses, whom they treacherously detained, and sold at these times; so that every enormity was practised in Africa, in consequence of the existence of the Trade. These specific instances, made a proper impression upon the lords of the council in their turn: for Dr. Spaarnian was a man of high character; he possessed the confidence of his sovereign; he had no interest whatever in giving his evidence on this subject, either on one or the other side; his means of information, too, had been large; he had also recorded the facts which had come before him, and he had his journal, written in the French language, to produce. The tide therefore, which had run so strongly against us, began now to turn a little in our favour.

While these examinations were going on, petitions continued to be sent to the house of commons, from various parts of the kingdom. No less than one hundred and three were presented in this session. The city of London, though she was drawn the other way, by the cries of commercial interest, made a sacrifice to humanity and justice. The two Universities applauded her conduct by their own example. Large manufacturing towns, and whole counties, expressed their sentiments and wishes in a similar manner. The Established Church, in separate dioceses, and the Quakers and other Dissenters, as separate religious bodies, joined in one voice upon this occasion.

The committee, in the interim, were not unmindful of the great work they had undertaken, and they continued to forward it in its different departments. They kept up a communication by letter with most of the worthy persons who had written to them, but particularly with Brissot

and Claviere, from whom they had the satisfaction of learning, that a society had at length been established at Paris, for the Abolition of the Slave-trade in France. The learned Marquis de Condorcet, had become the president of it. The virtuous Duc de la Rochefoucault, and the Marquis de la Fayette, had sanctioned it, by enrolling their names as the two first members. Petion, who was placed afterwards among the mayors of Paris, followed. Women also were not thought unworthy of being honorary and assistant members of this humane institution ; and among these were found the amiable Marchioness of la Fayette, Madame de Poivre, widow of the late intendant of the Isle of France, and Madame Necker, wife of the first minister of state.

The letters from new correspondents, during the latter part of this period, were the following :

One from Alexander Allison, esquire, of Edinburgh, in which he expressed it to be his duty to attempt to awaken the inhabitants of Scotland, to a knowledge of the monstrous evil of the Slave-trade, and to form a committee there to act in union with that of London, in carrying the great object of their institution into effect.

Another from Dr. Frossard, of Lyons, in which he offered his services for the South of France, and desired different publications to be sent him, that he might be better qualified to take a part in the promotion of the cause.

Another from professor Bruns, of Helmstadt in Germany, in which he desired to know the particulars relative to the institution of the committee, as many thousands upon the continent were then beginning to feel for the sufferings of the oppressed African race.

Another from William Senhouse, esquire, of the island of Barbadoes. In this he gave the particulars of two estates,

one of them his own, and the other belonging to a nobleman, upon each of which, the slaves, in consequence of humane treatment, had increased by natural population only. Another effect of this humane treatment, had been, that these slaves were among the most orderly and tractable in that island. From these and other instances, he argued, that if the planters would, all of them, take proper care of their slaves, their humanity would be repaid in a few years, by a valuable increase in their property, and they would never want supplies from a traffic, which had been so justly condemned.

Two others, the one from Travers Hartley, and the other from Alexander Jaffray, esquires, both of Dublin, were read. These gentlemen sent certain resolutions, which had been agreed upon by the chamber of commerce, and by the guild of merchants there, relative to the abolition of the Slave-trade. They rejoiced in the name of those, whom they represented, that Ireland had been unspotted by a traffic, which they held in such deep abhorrence, and promised, if it should be abolished in England, to take the most active measures to prevent it from finding an asylum in the ports of that kingdom.

The letters of William Senhouse, and of Travers Hartley, and of Alexander Jaffray, esquires, were ordered to be presented to the committee of privy council, and copies of them to be left there.

By the latter end of the month of March, there was an anxious expectation in the public, notwithstanding the privy council had taken up the subject, that some notice should be taken in the lower house of Parliament, of the numerous petitions which had been presented there. But at this time Mr. Wilberforce was ill, and unable to gratify the expectations which had been apparent. The committee there-

fore, who partook of the anxiety of the public, knew not what to do. They saw that two-thirds of the session had already passed. They saw no hope of Mr. Wilberforce's recovery for some time. Thus situated, they waited as patiently as they could, till the eighth of April,\* when they resolved to write to Mr. Wilberforce, to explain to him their fears and wishes, and to submit it to his consideration, whether, if he were unable himself, he would appoint some one in whom he could confide, to make some motion in parliament on the subject.

But the public expectation became now daily more visible. The inhabitants of Manchester, many of whom had signed the petition for that place, became impatient, and they appointed Thomas Walker and Thomas Cooper, esquires, as their delegates, to proceed to London to communicate with the committee on this subject, to assist them in their deliberations upon it, and to give their attendance while it was under discussion by the legislature.

At the time of the arrival of the delegates, who were received as such by the committee, a letter came from Bath, in which it was stated that Mr. Wilberforce's health was in such a precarious state, that his physicians dared not allow him to read any letter, which related to the subject of the Slave-trade.

The committee were now again at a loss how to act, when they were relieved from this doubtful situation, by a message from Mr. Pitt, who desired a conference with their chairman. Mr. Sharp, accordingly went, and on his re-

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\* Brissot attended in person at this committee on his way to America, which it was then an object with him to visit.

turn, made the following report : " He had a full opportunity," he said, " of explaining to Mr. Pitt, that the desire of the committee went to the entire abolition of the Slave-trade. Mr. Pitt assured him that his heart was with the committee as to this object, and that he considered himself pledged to Mr. Wilherforce, that the cause should not sustain any injury from his indisposition ; but at the same time observed, that the subject was of great political importance, and it was requisite to proceed in it with temper and prudence. He did not apprehend, as the examinations before the privy council would yet take up some time, that the subject could be fully investigated in the present session of parliament ; but said he would consider whether the forms of the house would admit of any measures, that would be obligatory on them to take it up early in the ensuing session."

In about a week after this conference, Mr. Morton Pitt was deputed by the minister to write to the committee, to say that he had found precedents for such a motion, as he conceived to be proper, and that he would submit it to the house of commons in a few days.

At the next meeting, which was on the sixth of May, and at which major Cartwright and the Manchester delegates assisted, Mr. Morton Pitt attended as a member of the committee, and said that the minister had fixed his motion for the ninth. It was then resolved that deputations should be sent to some of the leading members of parliament, to request their support of the approaching motion. I was included in one of these, and in that which was to wait upon Mr. Fox. We were received by him in a friendly manner. On putting the question to him, which related to the object of our mission, Mr. Fox paused for a little while, as if in the act of deliberation ; when he assured us unequivocally, and in language which could not be misun-

derstood, that he would support the object of the committee to its fullest extent, being convinced that there was no remedy for the evil, but in the total abolition of the trade.

### SECTION III.

At length, the ninth of May, 1788, the day fixed arrived, when this important subject was to be mentioned in the house of commons, for the first time,\* with a view to the public discussion of it. It is impossible for me to go within the narrow limits of this work, all that was said upon it; and yet as the debate, which ensued, was the first which took place upon it, I should feel inexcusable if I were not to take some notice of it.

Mr. Pitt rose. He said he intended to move a resolution relative to a subject, which was of more importance than any which had ever been agitated in that house. The honour he should not have had, but for a circumstance which he could not but deeply regret, the severe indignity of his friend, Mr. Wilberforce, in whose hands the measure, which belonged to justice, humanity, and national interest, was peculiarly well placed. The question in question, was no less than that of the Slave-trade; it was obvious, from the great number of petitions, which had been presented concerning it, how much it had engaged public attention, and consequently, how much it deserved the serious notice of that house, and how much it was their duty to take some measure concerning it. But



\* David Hartley made a motion some years before in the house; but this was only to establish a proposition, that the trade was contrary to the Laws of God, and the Rights of Man.

ever was done on such a subject, every one would agree, ought to be done with the maturest deliberation. Two opinions had prevailed without doors, as appeared from the language of the different petitions. It had been pretty generally thought that the African Slave-trade ought to be abolished. There were others, however, who thought that it only stood in need of regulations. But all had agreed that it ought not to remain as it stood at present. But that measure, which it might be the most proper to take, could only be discovered by a cool, patient, and diligent examination of the subject, in all its circumstances, relations, and consequences. This had induced him to form an opinion, that the present was not the proper time for discussing it; for the session was now far advanced, and there was also a want of proper materials for the full information of the house. It would, he thought, be better discussed, when it might produce some useful debate, and when that inquiry, which had been instituted by his majesty's ministers, he meant the examination by a committee of privy council, should be brought to such a state of maturity, as to make it fit that the result of it should be laid before the house. That inquiry, he trusted, would facilitate their investigation, and enable them the better to proceed to a decision, which should be equally founded on principles of humanity, justice, and sound policy. As there was not a probability of reaching so desirable an end, in the present state of the business, he meant to move a resolution, to pledge the house to the discussion of the question, early in the next session. If by that time, his honourable friend should be recovered, which he hoped would be the case, then he, Mr. Wilberforce, would take the lead in it; but should it unfortunately happen otherwise, then he, the chancellor of the exchequer, pledged himself to bring forward some pro-

position concerning it. The house, however, would observe, that he had studiously avoided giving any opinion of his own, on this great subject. He thought it wiser to defer this, till the time of the discussion should arrive. He concluded with moving, after having read the names of the places from whence the different petitions had come, "That this house will, early in the next session of parliament, proceed to take into consideration, the circumstances of the Slave-trade, complained of in the said petitions, and what may be fit to be done thereupon."

Mr. Fox began by observing, that he had long taken an interest in this great subject, which he had also minutely examined, and that it was his intention to have brought something forward himself, in parliament, respecting it: but when he heard that Mr. Wilberforce had resolved to take it up, he was unaffectedly rejoiced, not only knowing the purity of his principles and character, but because, from a variety of considerations as to the situations in which different men stood in the house, there was something that made him honestly think it was better that the business should be in the hands of that gentleman, than in his own. Having premised this, he said that, as so many petitions, and these signed by such numbers of persons of the most respectable character, had been presented, he was sorry that it had been found impossible that the subject of them could be taken up this year, and more particularly, as he was not able to see, as the chancellor of the exchequer had done, that there were circumstances, which might happen by the next year, which would make it more advisable and advantageous to take it up then, than it would have been to enter upon it in the present session. For certainly there could be no information laid before the house, through the medium of the lords of the council, which could not more

advantageously have been obtained by themselves, had they instituted a similar inquiry. It was their duty to advise the king, and not to ask his advice. This the constitution had laid down as one of its most essential principles; and though, in the present instance, he saw no cause for blame, because he was persuaded his majesty's ministers had not acted with any ill intention, it was still a principle never to be departed from, because it never could be departed from, without establishing a precedent which might lead to very serious abuses. He lamented that the privy council, who had received no petitions from the people on the subject, should have instituted an inquiry, and that the house of commons, the table of which had been loaded with petitions from various parts of the kingdom, should not have instituted any inquiry at all. He hoped these petitions would have a fair discussion in that house, independently of any information that could be given to it by his majesty's ministers. He was sorry therefore, that the consideration of the question, but more particularly where so much human suffering was concerned, should be put off to another session, when it was obvious that no advantage could be gained by the delay.

He then adverted to the secrecy, which the chancellor of the exchequer had observed, relative to his own opinion on this important subject. Why did he refuse to give it? As for himself, he, Mr. Fox, had no scruple to declare, at the outset, that the Slave-trade ought not to be regulated, but destroyed. To this opinion, his mind was made up; and he was persuaded that, the more the subject was considered, the more his opinion would gain ground; and it would be admitted, that to consider it in any other manner, or on any other principles than those of humanity and justice, would be idle and absurd.

He concluded by saying, that he would not oppose resolution, if other members thought it best to postpone consideration of the subject; but he should have been better pleased, if it had been discussed sooner; and he entirely reserved to himself the right of voting for any question upon it, that should be brought forward by any other member, in the course of the present session.

The chancellor of the exchequer said, that nothing he had heard, had satisfied him of the propriety of departing from the rule he had laid down for himself, of not offering, but of studiously avoiding to offer, any opinion upon a subject, till the time should arrive, when it could be properly argued. He thought that no discussion, which could take place that session, could lead to any useful measure; therefore he had wished not to argue it, till the time when it could be argued. A day would come, when every member would have an opportunity of stating his opinion; and he wished it might be discussed with a proper spirit and fair sides, on fair and liberal principles, and without any bias from local and interested considerations.

With regard to the inquiries instituted before the committee of privy council, he was sure, as soon as it became obvious that the subject must undergo a discussion, it was the duty of his majesty's ministers to set those inquiries on foot, which should best enable them to judge in what manner they could meet, or offer any proposition respecting the Slave-trade. And although such previous examination by no means went to deprive that house of its undoubted right to institute those inquiries, or to preclude them, they would be found greatly to facilitate them. But exclusive consideration, it would have been utterly impossible to come to any discussion of the subject, that could have

ought to a conclusion in the course of the present session. Did the inquiry, then, before the privy council prove a loss of time? So far from it, that, upon the whole, time had been gained by it. He had moved the resolution, therefore, to pledge the house to bring on the discussion early in the next session, when they would have a full opportunity of considering every part of the subject: first, Whether the whole of the trade ought to be abolished; and, if so, how and when. If it should be thought that the trade should only be put under certain regulations, what those regulations ought to be, and when they should take place. These were questions which must be considered; and therefore he had made his resolution as wide as possible, that there might be room for all necessary considerations to be taken. He repeated his declaration, that he would reserve his sentiments till the day of discussion should arrive: and again declared, that he earnestly wished to avoid an anticipation of the debate upon the subject. But if such debate was likely to take place, he would withdraw his motion, and offer it another day.

A few words then passed between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, in reply to each other; after which, lord Penrhyn rose. He said there were two classes of men, the African merchants, and the planters, both whose characters had been grossly calumniated. These wished that an inquiry might be instituted, and this immediately, conscious that the more their conduct was examined, the less they would be found to merit the opprobrium with which they had been loaded. The charges against the Slave-trade, were either true or false. If they were true, it ought to be abolished; but if on inquiry, they were found to be without foundation, justice ought to be done to the reputation of those who were concerned in it. He then said a few words, by which he

signified, that, after all, it might not be an improper measure to make regulations in the trade.

Mr. Burke said, the noble lord, who was a man of our himself, had reasoned from his own conduct, and, conscious of his own integrity, was naturally led to imagine that other men were equally just and honourable. Undoubtedly the merchants and planters had a right to call for investigation of their conduct, and their doing so, did great credit. The Slave-trade also ought equally to be required into. Neither did he deny that it was right his majesty's ministers should inquire into its merits for themselves. They had done their duty; but that house, had the petitions of the people on their table, had neglected it, by having so long deferred an inquiry of their own.

Mr. Burke said, he was one of those who wished for abolition of the Slave-trade. He thought it ought to be abolished, on principles of humanity and justice. If, ever, opposition of interests should render its total abolition impossible, it ought to be regulated, and that immediately. They need not send to the West-Indies to know the opinions of the planters on the subject. They were to consider first of all, and abstractedly from all political, personal and local considerations, that the Slave-trade was directly contrary to the principles of humanity and justice, and to the spirit of the British constitution; and that the state of slavery, which followed it, however mitigated, was as so improper, so degrading, and so ruinous to the faculties and capacities of human nature, that it ought not to be suffered to exist. He deprecated delay in this business, well for the sake of the planters as of the slaves.

Mr. Gascoyne, the other member for Liverpool, said he had no objection that the discussion should stand over to the next session of parliament, provided it could not

on in the present, because he was persuaded it would ultimately be found that his constituents, who were more immediately concerned in the trade, and who had been so shamefully calumniated, were men of respectable character. He hoped the privy council would print their report, when they had brought their inquiries to a conclusion, and that they would lay it before the house and the public, in order to enable all concerned, to form a judgment of what was proper to be done, relative to the subject, next session. With respect, however, to the total abolition of the Slave-trade, he must confess that such a measure was both unnecessary, visionary, and impracticable ; but he wished some alterations or modifications to be adopted. He hoped that, when the house came to go into the general question, they would not forget the trade, commerce, and navigation of the country.

Sir William Dolben said, that he did not then wish to enter into the discussion of the general question of the abolition of the Slave-trade, which the chancellor of the exchequer was so desirous of postponing ; but he wished to say a few words on what he conceived to be a most crying evil, and which might be immediately remedied, without infringing upon the limits of that question. He did not allude to the sufferings of the poor Africans in their own country, nor afterwards in the West-India islands, but to that intermediate state of ten-fold misery, which they underwent in their transportation. When put on board the ships, the poor unhappy wretches were chained to each other, hand and feet, and stowed so close, that they were not allowed above a foot and a half for each individual in breadth. Thus crammed together, like herrings in a barrel, they contracted putrid and fatal disorders ; so that they who came to inspect them in a morning, had occasionally to pick dead slaves out of their rows, and to unchain their carcasses from

the bodies of their wretched fellow-sufferers, to whom they had been fastened. Nor was it merely to the slaves, that the baneful effects of the contagion thus created, were confined. This contagion affected the ships' crews, and numbers of the seamen employed in the horrid traffic perished. This evil, he said, called aloud for a remedy, and that remedy ought to be applied soon ; otherwise no less than ten thousand lives might be lost between this and the next session. He wished therefore this grievance to be taken into consideration, independently of the general question ; and that some regulations, such as restraining the captains from taking above a certain number of slaves on board, according to the size of their vessels, and obliging them to let in fresh air, and provide better accommodation for the slaves during their passage, should be adopted.

Mr. Grigby thought it his duty to declare, that no privy council-report, or other mode of examination, could influence him. A traffic in the persons of men was so odious, that it ought every where, as soon as ever it was discovered, to be abolished.

Mr. Bastard was anxious that the house should proceed to the discussion of the subject in the present session. The whole country, he said, had petitioned ; and was it any satisfaction to the country to be told, that the committee of privy council were inquiring ? Who knew any thing of what was doing by the committee of privy council, or what progress they were making ? The inquiry ought to have been instituted in that house, and in the face of the public, that every body concerned, might know what was going on. The numerous petitions of the people ought immediately to be attended to. He reprobated delay on this occasion ; and as the honourable baronet, Sir William Dolben, had stated facts which were shocking to humanity, he hoped he

would move, that a committee might be appointed to inquire into their existence, that a remedy might be applied, if possible, before the sailing of the next ships for Africa.

The question having been put, the resolution was agreed to unanimously. Thus ended the first debate that ever took place in the commons, on this important subject. This debate, though many of the persons concerned in it, abstained cautiously from entering into the merits of the general question, became interesting, in consequence of circumstances attending it. Several rose up at once to give relief, as it were, to their feelings by utterance; but by so doing, they were prevented, many of them, from being heard. They who were heard, spoke with peculiar energy, as if warmed in an extraordinary manner by the subject. There was an apparent enthusiasm in behalf of the injured Africans. It was supposed by some, that there was a moment, in which, if the chancellor of the exchequer had moved for an immediate abolition of the Trade, he would have carried it that night; and both he and others, who professed an attachment to the cause, were censured for not having taken a due advantage of the disposition which was so apparent. But independently of the inconsistency of doing this on the part of the ministry, while the privy council were in the midst of their inquiries, and of the improbability that the other branches of the legislature would have concurred in so hasty a measure: What good would have accrued to the cause, if the abolition had been then carried? Those concerned in the cruel system, would never have rested quietly under the stigma under which they then laboured. They would have urged, that they had been condemned unheard. They would have decried the policy of the measure of the abolition; and where had it been proved? They would have demanded a reverse of it; and might

they not, in cooler moments, have succeeded ? Wh by entering into a patient discussion of the merits of the question, by bringing evidence upon it ; by reasoning upon that evidence, night after night, and year after year, and by disputing the ground, inch by inch, the abolition of the Slave-trade stands upon a rock, which never can be shaken. Many of those who were concerned in the cruel system now given up their prejudices, because they became convinced in the contest. A stigma too has been fixed upon it which can never be erased : and in a large record, in which the cruelty and injustice of it have been recognised in its visible characters, its impolicy also has been eternally en-

#### SECTION IV.

It was supposed, after the debate, of which the substance has been just given, that there would have been no further discussion of the subject till the next year ; but William Dolben became more and more affected by the considerations which he had offered to the house on the ninth of May. The trade, he found, was still to go on. The horrors of the transportation, or middle passage as it was called, which he conceived to be the worst in the catalogue of evils belonging to the system, would of necessity accompany it. The partial discussion of these, he believed, would be no infringement of the late resolution of the house. He was desirous, therefore, of doing something in the course of the present session, by which the miseries of the trade might be diminished as much as possible, whether it lasted, or till the legislature could take up the whole question. This desire he mentioned to several of his friends and as these approved of his design, he made it known on the twenty-first of May in the house of commons.

He began by observing, that he would take up but little of their time. He rose to move for leave to bring in a bill for the relief of those unhappy persons, the natives of Africa, from the hardships to which they were usually exposed in their passage from the coast of Africa to the colonies. He did not mean, by any regulations he might introduce for this purpose, to countenance or sanction the Slave-trade, which however modified, would be always wicked and unjustifiable. Nor did he mean, by introducing these, to go into the general question which the house had prohibited. The bill which he had in contemplation, went only to limit the number of persons to be put on board, to the tonnage of the vessel which was to carry them, in order to prevent them from being crowded too closely together ; to secure to them good and sufficient provisions ; and to take cognizance of other matters, which related to their health and accommodation : and this only, till parliament could enter into the general merits of the question. This humane interference, he thought no member would object to. Indeed, those for Liverpool, had both of them admitted, on the ninth of May, that regulations were desirable ; and he had since conversed with them, and was happy to learn that they would not oppose him on this occasion.

Mr. Whitbread highly approved of the object of the worthy baronet, which was to diminish the sufferings of an offending people. Whatever could be done to relieve them in their hard situation, till parliament could take up the whole of their case, ought to be done by men living in a civilized country, and professing the Christian religion : he therefore begged leave to second the motion which had been made.

Mr. Martin believed that no person could give any opposition to such a bill. Whatever were the merits of

the great question, all would allow that, if human beings were to be transported across the ocean, they should be carried over it with as little suffering as possible to themselves.

Lord Frederic Campbell was convinced that the postponing of all consideration of the subject till the next session, was a wise measure. He was sure that neither the house nor the public, were in a temper sufficiently cool to discuss it properly. There was a general warmth of feeling, or an enthusiasm about it, which ran away with the understandings of men, and disqualified them from judging soberly concerning it. He wished, therefore, that the present motion might be deferred.

Mr. William Smith said, that if the motion of the honourable baronet, had trespassed upon the great question reserved for consideration, he would have opposed it himself; but he conceived the subject, which it comprehended, might with propriety be separately considered; and if it were likely that a hundred, but much more a thousand, lives would be saved by this bill, it was the duty of that house to adopt it without delay.

The chancellor of the exchequer, though he meant still to conceal his opinion as to the general merits of the question, could not be silent here. He was of opinion that he could very consistently give this motion his support. There was a possibility, and a bare possibility was a sufficient ground with him, that in consequence of the resolution lately come to by the house, and the temper then manifested in it, those persons who were concerned in the Slave trade, might put the natives of Africa in a worse situation, during their transportation to the colonies, even than they were in before, by cramming additional numbers on board their vessels, in order to convey as many as possible to the West

Indies, before parliament ultimately decided on the subject. The possibility, therefore, that such a consequence might grow out of their late resolution, during the intervening months between the end of the present, and the commencement of the next session, was a good and sufficient parliamentary ground for them to provide immediate means, to prevent the existence of such an evil. He considered this as an act of indispensable duty, and on that ground, the bill should have his support.

Soon after this, the question was put, and leave was given for the introduction of the bill.

An account of these proceedings of the house, having been sent to the merchants of Liverpool, they held a meeting, and came to resolutions on the subject. They determined to oppose the bill in every stage in which it should be brought forward, and what was extraordinary, even the principle of it. Accordingly, between the twenty-first of May, and the second of June, on which latter day the bill, having been previously read a second time, was to be committed, petitions from interested persons had been brought against it, and consent had been obtained, that both counsel and evidence should be heard.

From the second of June to the seventeenth, the house continued to hear the evidence at intervals, but the members for Liverpool, took every opportunity of occasioning delay. They had recourse twice to counting out the house; and at another time, though complaint had been made of their attempts to procrastinate, they opposed the resuming of their own evidence, with the same view, and this merely for the frivolous reason, that, though there was then a suitable opportunity, notice had not been previously given. But in this proceeding, other members feeling indignant at their conduct, they were overruled.

The witnesses brought by the Liverpool merchants, against this humane bill, were the same as they had before sent for examination to the privy council, namely, Mr. Norris, lieutenant Matthews, and others. On the other side of the question, it was not deemed expedient to bring any. It was soon perceived, that it would be possible to refute the former, out of their own mouths, and to do this, seemed more eligible than to proceed in the other way. Mr. Pitt, however, took care to send captain Parrey, of the royal navy, to Liverpool, that he might take the tonnage, and internal dimensions of several slave-vessels, which were then there, supposing that these, when known, would enable the house to detect any misrepresentations, which the delegates from that town, might be disposed to make upon this subject.

It was the object of the witnesses, when examined, to prove two things : first, that regulations were unnecessary, because the present mode of the transportation, was sufficiently convenient for the objects of it, and was well adapted to preserve their comfort and their health. They had sufficient room, sufficient air, and sufficient provisions. When upon deck, they made merry, and amused themselves with dancing. As to the mortality, or the loss of them by death, in the course of their passage, it was trifling. In short, the voyage from Africa to the West Indies " was one of the happiest periods of a Negro's life."

Secondly, that if the merchants were hindered from taking less than two full-sized, or three smaller Africans, to a ton, then the restriction would operate, not as a regulation, but as the utter ruin of the trade. Hence the present bill, under the specious mask of a temporary interference, sought nothing less than its abolition.

These assertions having been severally made, by the former of which it was insinuated, that the African, unhappy in his own country, found in the middle passage, under the care of the merchants, little less than an Elysian retreat, it was now proper to institute a severe inquiry into the truth of them. Mr. Pitt, Sir Charles Middleton, Mr. William Smith, and Mr. Beaufoy, took a conspicuous part on the occasion, but particularly the two latter, to whom much praise was due for the constant attention they bestowed upon this subject. Question after question, was put by these to the witnesses; and from their own mouths they dragged out, by means of a cross-examination, as severe as could be well instituted, the following melancholy account:

Every slave, whatever his size might be, was found to have only five feet and six inches in length, and sixteen inches in breadth, to lie in. The floor was covered with bodies stowed or packed according to this allowance. But between the floor and the deck, or ceiling, were often platforms, or broad shelves in the mid-way, which were covered with bodies also. The height from the floor to the ceiling, within which space the bodies on the floor, and those on the platforms lay, seldom exceeded five feet eight inches, and in some cases it did not exceed four feet.

The men were chained two and two together by their hands and feet, and were chained also by means of ring-bolts, which were fastened to the deck. They were confined in this manner at least all the time they remained upon the coast, which was, from six weeks, to six months, as it might happen.

Their allowance consisted of one pint of water a day to each person, and they were fed twice a day with yams and horse-beans.

After meals, they jumped up in their irons for exercise. This was so necessary for their health, that they were whipped if they refused to do it. And this jumping had been termed dancing.

They were usually fifteen and sixteen hours below deck, out of the twenty-four. In rainy weather, they could not be brought up for two or three days together. If the ship was full, their situation was then distressing. They sometimes drew their breath with anxious and laborious efforts, and some died of suffocation.

With respect to their health in these voyages, the mortality, where the African constitution was the strongest, or on the windward coast, was only about five in a hundred. In thirty-five voyages, an account of which was produced, about six in a hundred was the average number lost. But this loss was still greater at Calabar and Bonny, which were the greatest markets for slaves. This loss, too, did not include those who died, either while the vessels were lying upon the coast, or after their arrival in the West-Indies, of the disorders which they had contracted upon the voyage. Three and four in a hundred, had been known to die in this latter case.

But besides these facts, which were forced out of the witnesses, by means of the cross-examination which took place, they were detected in various falsehoods.

They were found also guilty of a wilful concealment of such facts, as they knew, if communicated, would have invalidated their own testimony. I was instrumental in detecting them on one of these occasions, myself. When Mr. Dalzell was examined, he was not wholly unknown to me. My Liverpool muster-rolls, told me that he had lost fifteen seamen out of forty in his last voyage. This was a sufficient ground to go upon ; for generally, where the morta-

lity of the seamen has been great, it may be laid down that the mortality of the slaves has been considerable also. I waited patiently, till his evidence was nearly closed, but he had then made no unfavourable statements to the house. I desired, therefore, that a question might be put to him, and in such a manner, that he might know that they, who put it, had got a clew to his secrets. He became immediately embarrassed. His voice faltered. He confessed with trembling, that he had lost a third of his sailors in his last voyage. Pressed hard immediately by other questions, he then acknowledged, that he had lost one hundred and twenty, or a third of his slaves also. But would he say that these were all he had lost in that voyage? No: twelve others had perished by an accident, for they were drowned. But were no others lost besides the one hundred and twenty, and the twelve? None, he said, upon the voyage, but between twenty and thirty before he left the Coast. Thus this champion of the merchants, this advocate for the health and happiness of the slaves, in the middle passage, lost nearly a hundred and sixty of the unhappy persons committed to his superior care, in a single voyage!

The evidence, on which I have now commented, having been delivered, the counsel summed up on the seventeenth of June, when the committee proceeded to fill up the blanks in the bill. Mr. Pitt moved that the operation of it be retrospective, and that it commence from the tenth instant. This was violently opposed by lord Penrhyn, Mr. Gascoyne, and Mr. Brickdale, but was at length acceded to.

Sir William Dolben then proposed to apportion five men to every three tons, in every ship under one hundred and fifty tons burthen, which had the space of five feet between the decks, and three men to two tons, in every vessel beyond one hundred and fifty tons burthen, which had equal ac-

commodation, in point of height between the decks. This occasioned a very warm dispute, which was not settled for some time, and which gave rise to some beautiful and interesting speeches on the subject.

Mr. William Smith pointed out, in the clearest manner, many of the contradictions, which I have just stated in commenting upon the evidence. Indeed he had been a principal means of detecting them. He proved how little worthy of belief the witnesses had shown themselves, and how necessary they had made the present bill, by their own confession. The worthy baronet, indeed, had been too indulgent to the merchants, in the proportion he had fixed of the number of persons to be carried, to the tonnage of their vessels. He then took a feeling view of what would be the wretched state of the poor Africans on board, even if the bill passed as it now stood ; and conjured the house, if they would not allow them more room, at least not to infringe upon that which had been proposed.

Lord Belgrave, now Grosvenor, animadverted with great ability upon the cruelties of the trade, which he said had been fully proved at the bar. He took notice of the extraordinary opposition which had been made to the bill then before them, and which he believed every gentleman, who had a proper feeling of humanity, would condemn. He hoped that the members for Liverpool, would urge no further opposition to the bill, but that they would join with the house in an effort to enlarge the empire of humanity ; and that, while they were stretching out the strong arm of justice, to punish the degraders of British honour and humanity in the East, they would with equal spirit, exert their powers to dispense the blessings of their protection to those unhappy Africans, who were to serve them in the West.

Mr. Beaufoy entered minutely into an examination of the

information, which had been given by the witnesses, and which afforded unanswerable arguments for the passing of the bill. He showed the narrow space, which they themselves had been made to allow for the package of a human body, and the ingenious measures they were obliged to resort to, for stowing this living cargo within the limits of the ship. He adverted next to the case of Mr. Dalzell ; and showed how one dismal fact after another, each making against their own testimony, was extorted from him. He then went to the trifling mortality, said to be experienced in these voyages, upon which subject he spoke in the following words : “ Though the witnesses are some of them interested in the trade, and all of them parties against the bill, their confession is, that of the Negroes of the windward coast, who are men of the strongest constitution which Africa affords, no less on an average than five in each hundred, perish in the voyage : a voyage, it must be remembered, but of six weeks. In a twelve month, then, what must be the proportion of the dead ? No less than forty-three in a hundred, which is seventeen times the usual rate of mortality ; for all the estimates of life, suppose no more than a fortieth of the people, or two and a half in the hundred, to die within the space of a year. Such then is the comparison. In the ordinary course of nature, the number of persons, including those in age and infancy, the weakest periods of existence, who perish in the space of a twelve-month, is at the rate of but two and a half in a hundred ; but in an African voyage, notwithstanding the old are excluded, and few infants admitted, so that those who are shipped are in the firmest period of life, the list of deaths presents an annual mortality of forty-three in a hundred. It presents this mortality, even in vessels from the windward coast of Africa ; but in those which sail to Bonny,

Benin, and the Calabars, from whence the greatest proportion of the slaves are brought, this mortality is increased by a variety of causes, of which the greater length of the voyage is one, and is said to be twice as large, which supposes that in every hundred, the deaths annually amount to no less than eighty-six. Yet even the former comparatively low mortality, of which the counsel speaks with so much satisfaction, as a proof of the kind and compassionate treatment of the slaves, even this indolent and lethargic destruction, gives to the march of death, seventeen times its usual speed. It is a destruction, which, if general but for ten years, would [depopulate the world, blast the purposes of its creation, and extinguish the human race.”

The chancellor of the exchequer rose next ; and after having made some important observations on the evidence, which took up much time, he declared himself most unequivocally in favour of the motion made by the honourable baronet. He was convinced that the regulation proposed, would not tend to the abolition of the trade ; but if it even went so far, he had no hesitation openly & boldly to declare, that if it could not be carried on, in a manner different from that stated by the members for Liverpool, he would retract what he had said on a former day, against going into the general question ; and, waving every other discussion than what had that day taken place, he would give his vote for the utter annihilation of it at once. It was a trade, which it was shocking to humanity to hear detailed. If it were to be carried on as proposed by the petitioners, it would, besides its own intrinsic baseness, be contrary to every humane and Christian principle, and to every sentiment that ought to inspire the breast of man, and would reflect the greatest dishonour on the British senate, and the British nation. He therefore hoped that the house, being now in

possession of such information as never hitherto had been brought before them, would in some measure endeavour to extricate themselves from that guilt, and from that remorse, which every one of them ought to feel, for having suffered such monstrous cruelties to be practised, upon an helpless and unoffending part of the human race.

Mr. Martin complimented Mr. Pitt in terms of the warmest panegyric, on his noble sentiments, declaring that they reflected the greatest honour upon him, both as an Englishman, and as a man.

Soon after this, the house divided upon the motion of Sir William Dolben. Fifty-six appeared to be in favour of it, and only five against it. The latter consisted of the two members for Liverpool, and three other interested persons. This was the first division which ever took place on this important subject. The other blanks were then filled up, and the bill was passed without further delay.

The next day, or on the eighteenth of June, it was carried up to the house of lords. The slave merchants of London, Liverpool, and Bristol, immediately presented petitions against it, as they had done in the lower house. They prayed that counsel might open their case; and though they had been driven from the commons, on account of their evidence, with disgrace, they had the effrontery to ask, that they might call witnesses here also.

Counsel and evidence having been respectively heard, the bill was ordered to be committed the next day. The lords attended according to summons. But on a motion by Dr. Warren, the Bishop of Bangor, who stated that the lord chancellor Thurlow, was much indisposed, and that he wished to be present when the question was discussed, the committee was postponed.

It was generally thought that the reason for this postponement, and particularly as it was recommended by a prelate, was, that the chancellor might have an opportunity of forwarding this humane bill. But it was found to be quite otherwise. It appeared that the motive was, that he might give to it, by his official appearance, as the chief servant of the crown in that house, all the opposition in his power. For when the day arrived, which had been appointed for the discussion, and when the lords Bathurst and Hawkesbury, now Liverpool, had expressed their opinions, which were different, relative to the time when the bill should take place, he rose up, and pronounced a bitter and vehement oration against it. He said, among other things, that it was full of inconsistency and nonsense, from the beginning to the end. The French had lately offered large premiums for the encouragement of this trade. They were a politic people, and the presumption was, that we were doing politically wrong, by abandoning it. The bill ought not to have been brought forward in this session. The introduction of it, was a direct violation of the faith of the other house. It was unjust, when an assurance had been given, that the question should not be agitated till next year, that this sudden fit of philanthropy, which was but a few days old, should be allowed to disturb the public mind, and to become the occasion of bringing men to the metropolis with tears in their eyes, and horror in their countenance ;\* to deprecate the ruin of their property, which they had embarked on the faith of parliament.

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\* Monstrous perversion of sentiment ! Mark how he endeavours to excite the sympathy of the house, for those who might possibly sustain some loss in their property, by a little salutary restraint up-

The extraordinary part, which the lord chancellor 'Thurlow, took upon this occasion, was ascribed at the time by many, who moved in the higher circles, to a shyness or misunderstanding, which had taken place between him and Mr. Pitt, on other matters ; when, believing this bill to have been a favourite measure with the latter, he determined to oppose it. But, whatever were his motives, his opposition had a mischievous effect, on account of the high situation in which he stood. For he not only influenced some of the lords themselves, but, by taking the cause of the slave-merchants, so conspicuously under his wing, he gave them boldness to look up again, under the stigma of their iniquitous calling, and courage even to resume vigorous operations after their disgraceful defeat. Hence arose those obstacles, which will be found to have been thrown in the way of the passing of the bill from this period.

The debate having closed, during which nothing more was done, than filling up the blanks with the time when the bill was to begin to operate, the committee was adjourned. But the bill after this, dragged on so heavily, that it would be tedious to detail the proceedings upon it, from day to day. I shall, therefore, satisfy myself with the following observations concerning them. The committee sat not less than five different times, which consumed the space of eight days, before a final decision took place. The duke of Chandos, and lord Sydney, were the most conspicuous among the



on the enormities of this traffic, while there is not one expression of feeling for the poor Africans, who were not only bereft of all that rational beings hold dear, but sacrificed, in the manner of conducting it, by hundreds, and by thousands. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." L.

opposers of this humane bill ; and the duke of Richmond, the marquis Townshend, the earl of Carlisle, the Bishop of London, and earl Stanhope, among the most strenuous supporters of it. At length it passed, by a majority of nineteen to eleven votes.\*

While the legislature was occupied in the consideration of this bill, the lords of the council continued their examinations, that they might collect as much light as possible, previously to the general agitation of the question in the next session of parliament. Among others, I underwent an examination. I gave my testimony first relative to many of the natural productions of Africa, of which I produced the specimens. These were such as I had collected in the course of my journey to Bristol, Liverpool, and elsewhere. I explained, secondly, the loss and usage of seamen in the Slave-trade. To substantiate certain points, which belonged to this branch of the subject, I left several depositions and articles of agreement for the examination of the council. With respect to others, as it would take a long time to give all the data upon which calculations had



\* The bill above mentioned was returned to the Commons, to consider the amendments made by the Lords. Upon considering these, it was thought most expedient to do it away, and introduce a new one ; which was accordingly done by Sir William Dolben ; but this not meeting the views of a majority in the house, a third one was introduced ; which after meeting with much opposition, occasioning delay, was finally passed by the Lords on the last day of the session. " And thus at length," says our author, " passed through the upper house, as through an ordeal of fire, the first bill that ever put fetters upon that barbarous and destructive monster, the Slave-trade." " The next day," continues he, " or on Friday, July the eleventh, the king gave his assent to it, and closed the session." L.

been made, and the manner of making them, I was desired to draw up a statement of particulars, and to send it to the council at a future time. I left also depositions with them, relative to certain instances of the mode of procuring and treating slaves.

The committee also for effecting the abolition of the Slave-trade continued their attention, during this period, towards the promotion of the different objects, which came within the range of the institution.

They added the reverend Dr. Coombe, in consequence of the great increase of their business, to the list of their members.

I had now finished my "Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave-trade," which I composed from materials collected chiefly during my journey to Bristol, Liverpool, and Lancaster. These materials I had admitted with great caution and circumspection; indeed I admitted none, for which I could not bring official and other authentic documents, or living evidences, if necessary, whose testimony could not reasonably be denied; and, when I gave them to the world, I did it under the impression that I ought to give them as scrupulously, as if I were to be called upon to substantiate them upon oath. It was of peculiar moment that this book should make its appearance at this time. First, Because it would give the lords of the council, who were then sitting, an opportunity of seeing many important facts, and of inquiring into their authenticity; and it might suggest to them also some new points, or such as had not fallen within the limits of the arrangement they had agreed upon, for their examinations on this subject; and, Secondly, Because, as the members of the house of commons, were to take the question into consideration early in the next session, it would give them also new light and information upon

it, before this period. Accordingly the committee ordered two thousand copies of it to be struck off, for these and other objects ; and though the contents of it were most diligently sifted by the different opponents of the cause, they never even made an attempt to answer it. It continued, on the other hand, during the inquiry of the legislature, to afford the basis, or grounds, upon which to examine evidences on the political part of the subject ; and evidences thus examined, continued in their turn to establish it.

Among the other books ordered to be printed by the committee, within the period now under our consideration, were a new edition of two thousand copies of the Dean of Middleham's Letter, and another of three thousand of "Falconbridge's Account of the Slave-trade."

The session of parliament having closed, the committee thought it right to make a report to the public, in which they gave an account of the great progress of their cause since the last, of the state in which they then were, and of the unjustifiable conduct of their opponents, who industriously misrepresented their views, but particularly by attributing to them the design of abolishing slavery ; and they concluded by exhorting their friends, not to relax their endeavours, on account of favourable appearances, but to persevere, as if nothing had been done, under the pleasing hope of an honourable triumph.

## CHAPTER IV.

*'s travels to obtain testimony ; and his labours in  
exion with the committee to advance the cause of the  
ition.*

*'the first motion for abolishing the Slave-trade.*



## SECTION I.

ters had now become serious. The gauntlet had  
rown down and accepted. The combatants had ta-  
air stations, and the contest was to be renewed, which  
be decided soon, on the great theatre of the nation.  
mmittee, by the very act of their institution, had pro-  
d the Slave-trade to be criminal. They, on the oth-  
d, who were concerned in it, had denied the charge.  
me the one to prove, and the other to refute it, or to  
the ensuing session.

committee, in this perilous situation, were anxious  
out such other persons, as might become proper evi-  
before the privy council. They had hitherto sent  
only nine or ten, and they had then only another,  
they could count upon for this purpose, in their view.  
roposal of sending persons to Africa, and the West  
, who might come back and report what they had  
sed, had been already negatived. The question then  
what they were to do. Upon this they deliberated,  
e result was an application to me to undertake a jour-  
different parts of the kingdom, for this purpose.

When this determination was made, I was at Teston, writing a long letter to the privy council, on the ill usage and mortality of the seamen employed in the Slave-trade, which it had been previously agreed should be received as evidence there. I thought it proper, however, before I took my departure, to form a system of questions upon the general subject. These I divided into six tables. The first related to the productions of Africa, and the disposition and manners of the natives. The second, to the methods of reducing them to slavery. The third, to the manner of bringing them to the ships, their value, the medium of exchange, and other circumstances. The fourth, to their transportation. The fifth, to their treatment in the colonies. The sixth, to the seamen employed in the trade. These tables contained together, one hundred and forty-five questions. My idea was, that they should be printed on a small sheet of paper, which should be folded up in seven or eight leaves, of the length and breadth of a small almanac, and then be sent in franks to our different correspondents. These, when they had them, might examine persons capable of giving evidence, who might live in their neighbourhoods, or fall in their way, and return us their examinations by letter.

The committee having approved and printed the tables of questions, I began my tour. I had selected the southern counties from Kent to Cornwall, for it. I had done this, because these included the great stations of the ships of war in ordinary; and as these were all under the superintendence of Sir Charles Middleton, as comptroller of the navy, I could get an introduction to those on board them. Secondly, because sea-faring people, when they retire from a marine life, usually settle in some town or village upon the coast.

Of this tour I shall not give the reader any very particular account. I shall mention only those things which are most worthy of his notice in it. At Poole, in Dorsetshire, I laid the foundation of a committee, to act in harmony with that of London, for the promotion of the cause.

As Poole was a great place for carrying on the trade to Newfoundland, I determined to examine the assertion of the earl of Sandwich, in the house of lords, when he said, in the debate on Sir William Dolben's bill, that the Slave-trade was not more fatal to seamen, than the Newfoundland and some others.

On a comparison with the Slave-trade, the result I found to be, that two vessels to Africa would destroy more seamen, than eighty-three, sailing to Newfoundland. There was this difference also to be noted, that the loss in the one trade was generally by the weather or by accident, but in the other, by cruel treatment or disease; and that they, who went out in a declining state of health in the one, came home generally recovered; whereas they, who went out robust in the other, came home in a shattered condition.

At Plymouth I laid the foundation of another committee.

From Plymouth I journeyed on to Falmouth, and from thence to Exeter, where having meetings with the late Mr. Samuel Milford, the late Mr. George Manning, the reverend James Manning, Thomas Sparkes, and others, a desire became manifest among them, of establishing a committee there. This was afterwards effected.

With respect to evidence, which was the great object of this tour, I found myself often very unpleasantly situated in collecting it. I heard of many persons capable of giving it to our advantage, to whom I could get no introduction.

But the difficulties and disappointments in other respects, which I experienced in this tour, even where I had an in-

truduction, and where the parties were not interested in the continuance of the Slave-trade, were greater than people in general would have imagined. One would have thought, considering the great enthusiasm of the nation on this important subject, that they, who could have given satisfactory information upon it, would have rejoiced to do it. But I found it otherwise, and this frequently to my sorrow. There was an aversion in persons to appear before such a tribunal as they conceived the privy council to be. With men of shy or timid character, this operated as an insuperable barrier in their way. But it operated more or less upon all. It was surprising to see what little circumstances affected many. When I took out my pen and ink to put down the information, which a person was giving me, he became evidently embarrassed and frightened. He began to excuse himself from staying, by alledging that he had nothing more to communicate, and he took himself away as quickly as he could with decency.

Others went off, because it happened that immediately on my interview, I acquainted them with the nature of my errand, and solicited their attendance in London. Conceiving that I had no right to ask them such a favour, or terrified at the abruptness and apparent awfulness of my request, some of them gave me an immediate denial, which they would never afterwards retract. I began to perceive, in time, that it was only by the most delicate management, that I could get forward on these occasions. I resolved therefore for the future, except in particular cases, that, when I should be introduced to persons who had a competent knowledge of this trade, I would talk with them upon it as upon any ordinary subject, and then leave them, without saying any thing about their becoming evidences. I would take care, however, to commit all their conversation

to writing, when it was over, and I would then try to find out that person among their relations or friends, who could apply to them for this purpose, with the least hazard of a refusal.

There were others also, who, though they were not so much impressed by the considerations mentioned, yet objected to give their public testimony. Those, whose livelihood, or promotion, or expectations, were dependant upon the government of the country, were generally backward upon these occasions. This objection was very prevalent in that part of the kingdom which I had selected for my tour.

The reader can hardly conceive how my ~~mind~~ was agitated and distressed on these different accounts. To have travelled more than two months, to have seen many who could have materially served our cause, and to have lost most of them, was very trying. Suffice it to say, that after having travelled upwards of sixteen hundred miles backwards and forwards, and having conversed with forty-seven persons, who were capable of promoting the cause by their evidence, I could only prevail upon nine, by all the interest I could make, to be examined.

On my return to London, whither I had been called up by the committee to take upon me the superintendence of the evidence, which the privy council was now ready again to hear, I found my brother; he was then a young officer in the navy; and as I knew he felt as warmly as I did in this great cause, I prevailed upon him to go to Havre de Grace, the great slave-port in France, where he might make his observations for two or three months, and then report what he had seen and heard, so that we might have some one to counteract any false statement of things, which might be made relative to the subject, in that quarter.

At length the examinations were resumed, and with them the contest, in which our own reputation, and the fate of our cause, were involved. The committee for the abolition, had discovered one or two willing evidences during my absence, and Mr. Wilberforce, who was now recovered from his severe indisposition, had found one or two others. These, added to my own, made a respectable body ; but we had sent no more than four or five of these to the council, when the king's illness unfortunately stopped our career. For nearly five weeks between the middle of November and January, the examinations were interrupted or put off, so that at the latter period, we began to fear that there would be scarcely time to hear the rest : for not only the privy council-report was to be printed, but the contest itself, was to be decided by the evidence contained in it, in the existing session.

The examinations, however, went on, but they went on only slowly. Among others, I offered my mite of information again. I wished the council to see more of my African productions and manufactures, that they might really know what Africa was capable of affording, instead of the Slave-trade, and that they might make a proper estimate of the genius and talents of the natives. The samples which I had collected, had been obtained by great labour, and at no inconsiderable expense. The lords having consented, I selected several things for their inspection out of my box.

We were now advanced far into February, when we were alarmed by the intelligence, that the lords of the council were going to prepare their report. At this time we had sent but few persons to them to examine, in comparison with our opponents, and we had yet eighteen to introduce : for answers had come in, to my tables of questions, from several places, and persons had been pointed out to us by our

correspondents, who had increased our list of evidences to this number. I wrote therefore, to them, at the desire of the committee for the abolition, and gave them the names of the eighteen, and requested that all of them might be examined. I was informed in writing, "that the Bishop of London had laid my last letter before their lordships, and that it was their lordships' desire, that I would give notice to any three of them, whose information I might consider as the most material, of the above determination, that they might attend the committee accordingly."

This answer, considering the difficulties we had found in collecting a body of evidence, and the critical situation in which we then were, was peculiarly distressing; but we had no remedy left us, nor could we reasonably complain. Three therefore were selected, and they were sent to deliver their testimony on their arrival in town.

But before the last of these had left the council-room, who should come up to me, but Mr. Arnold! He had but lately arrived at Bristol from Africa: and having heard from our friends there, that we had been daily looking for him, he had come to us in London. He and Mr. Gardiner were the two surgeons, who had promised me, when I was in Bristol, in the year 1787, that they would keep a journal of facts for me, during the voyages they were then going to perform. They had both of them kept this promise. Gardiner, I found, had died upon the Coast, and his journal, having been discovered at his death, had been buried with him in great triumph. But Arnold had survived, and he came now to offer us his services in the cause.

As it was a pity that such correct information, as that taken down in writing upon the spot, should be lost, for all the other evidences, except Dr. Spaarman and Mr. Wadstrom, had spoken from their memory only, I made all the

chancery. He then delivered the paper in which it contained, to the lords of the council, who, on receiving it, read it throughout, and then questioned him upon it.

At this time, also, my brother returned with accounts and papers relative to the Slave-trade, from Hav Grace; but as I had pledged myself to offer no other person to be examined, his evidence was lost. Thus, after the pains we had taken, and in a contest, too, on the success of which our own reputation, and the fate of America depended, we were obliged to fight the battle, with less than we could have brought into the field; while our opponents, on the other hand, on account of their superior advantages, had mustered all their forces, not having lost a single man.

Having now given some account of these proceedings, I shall state those of the committee; or show how they contributed, by fulfilling the duties of their several departments, to promote the cause in the interim.

They continued to adopt and circulate books, that might still enlighten the public mind on the subject.

**Bill.** Notes by a Planter, on the two Reports from the Committee of the honourable House of Assembly of Jamaica ; Observations on the Slave-trade, by Mr. Wadstrom ; and Dickson's Letters on Slavery. " These were all new publications. To those they added others of less note, with new editions of the old.

They kept up a communication with the different societies established in America.

They directed their attention also to the continent of Europe. They had already applied to the king of Sweden, in favour of their cause, and had received a gracious answer. They now attempted to interest other potentates in it. For this purpose, they bound up in an elegant manner, two sets of the " Essays on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, and on the Impolicy of the Slave-trade," and sent them to the Chevalier de Pinto, in Portugal. They bound up in a similar manner, three sets of the same, and sent them to Mr. Eden, now lord Auckland, at Madrid, to be given to the king of Spain, the Count d'Aranda, and the Marquis del Campomanes.

They kept up their correspondence with the committee at Paris, which had greatly advanced itself in the eyes of the French nation ; so that, when the different bailliages sent deputies to the States-General, they instructed them to take the Slave-trade into their consideration as a national object, and with a view to its abolition.

They kept up their correspondence with Dr. Frossard of Lyons. He had already published in France, on the subject of the Slave-trade ; and now he offered the committee to undertake the task, so long projected by them, of collecting such arguments and facts concerning it, and translating them into different languages, as might be useful in forwarding their views in foreign parts.

But the day was now drawing near, when it was expected that this great contest would be decided. Mr. Wilberforce, on the nineteenth of March, rose up in the house of commons, and desired the resolution to be read, by which the house stood pledged to take the Slave-trade into their consideration in the then session. He then moved that the house should resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, on Thursday, the twenty-third of April, for this purpose. This motion was agreed to ; after which he moved for certain official documents, necessary to throw light upon the subject in the course of its discussion.

This motion, by means of which the great day of trial was now fixed, seemed to be the signal for the planters, merchants, and other interested persons, to begin a furious opposition. Meetings were accordingly called by advertisement. At these meetings, much warmth and virulence were manifested in debate, and propositions breathing a spirit of anger, were adopted. It was suggested there, in the vehemence of passion, that the Islands could exist independently of the mother-country ; nor were even threats withheld to intimidate government from effecting the abolition.

From this time, also, the public papers began to be filled with such statements as were thought most likely to influence the members of the house of commons, previously to the discussion of the question.

The first impression attempted to be made upon them, was with respect to the slaves themselves. It was contended, and attempted to be shown, by the revival of the old argument of human sacrifices in Africa, that these were better off in the islands, than in their own country. It was contended also, that they were people of inferior capacities, and but little removed from the brute creation ; whence, an

inference was drawn, that their treatment, against which so much clamour had arisen, was adapted to their intellect and feelings.

The next attempt was to degrade the abolitionists in the opinion of the house, by showing the wildness and absurdity of their schemes. It was again insisted upon, that emancipation was the real object of the former; so that thousands of slaves would be let loose in the islands, to rob or perish, and who could never be brought back again, into habits of useful industry.

An attempt was then made to excite their pity in behalf of the planters. The abolition, it was said, would produce insurrections among the slaves. But insurrections would produce the massacre of their masters; and, if any of these should happily escape from butchery, they would be reserved only for ruin.\*

An appeal was then made to them, on the ground of their own interest, and of that of the people, whom they represented. It was stated, that the ruin of the islands, would be the ruin of themselves and of the country. Its revenue would be half annihilated. Its naval strength would decay. Merchants, manufacturers and others, would come to beggary. But in this deplorable situation, they would expect to be indemnified for their losses. Compensation, indeed must follow. It could not be withheld. But what would be the amount of it? The country would have no less than from eighty to an hundred millions to pay the suf-



\* It is worthy of remark, that none of these frightful predictions have ever been realized. Insurrections, and massacres, have never been the consequence of the Abolition of the Slave-trade in a single instance.

ferers ; and it would be driven to such distress in paying this sum, as it had never before experienced.

These different statements, appearing now in the public papers from day to-day, began, in this early stage of the question, when the subject, in all its bearings, was known but to few, to make a considerable impression upon those, who were soon to be called to the decision of it. But that, which had the greatest effect upon them, was the enormous amount of the compensation, which, it was said, must be made. This statement against the abolition, was making its way so powerfully, that Archdeacon Paley thought it his duty to write, and to send to the committee, a little treatise called "Arguments against the unjust Pretensions of Slave-dealers and Holders, to be indemnified by pecuniary Allowances at the public Expense, in case the Slave-trade should be abolished." This treatise, when the substance of it was detailed in the public papers, had its influence upon several members of the house of commons. But there were others, who had been, as it were, panic struck by the statement. These, in their fright, seemed to have lost the right use of their eyes, or to have looked through a magnifying glass. With these, the argument of emancipation, which they would have rejected at another time as ridiculous, obtained now easy credit. The massacres too, and the ruin, though only conjectural, they admitted also. Hence some of them deserted our cause wholly, while others, wishing to do justice as far as they could to the slaves on the one hand, and to their own countrymen on the other, adopted a middle line of conduct, and would go no further than the regulation of the trade.

While these preparations were making by our opponents to prejudice the minds of those who were to be the judges in this contest, Mr. Pitt presented the privy council-report a

the bar of the house of commons ; and as it was a large folio volume, and contained the evidence upon which the question was to be decided, it was necessary that time should be given to the members to peruse it. Accordingly the twelfth of May was appointed, instead of the twenty-third of April, for the discussion of the question.

This postponement of the discussion of the question, gave time to all parties to prepare themselves further. The merchants and planters availed themselves of it, to collect petitions to parliament, from interested persons against the abolition of the trade ; to wait upon members of parliament by deputation, in order to solicit their attendance in their favour ; and to renew their injurious paragraphs in the public papers. The committee for the abolition, availed themselves of it to reply to these ; and here Dr. Dickson, who had been secretary to governor Hey, in Barbadoes, and who had offered the committee his Letters on Slavery, and his services also, were of singular use. Many members of parliament availed themselves of it, to retire into the country to read the report. Among the latter were Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Pitt. In this retirement they discovered, notwithstanding the great disadvantages under which we had laboured with respect to evidence, that our cause was safe, and that as far as it was to be decided by reason and sound policy, it would triumph. It was in this retirement, that Mr. Pitt made those able calculations, which satisfied him for ever after, as the minister of the country, as to the safety of the great measure of the abolition of the Slave trade ; for he had clearly proved, that not only the islands could go on in a flourishing state, without supplies from the coast of Africa, but that they were then in a condition to do it.

## SECTION II.

At length, the twelfth of May arrived. Mr. Wilberforce rose up in the commons, and moved the order of the day for the house to resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the petitions, which had been presented against the Slave-trade.

This order having been read, he moved that the report of the committee of privy council; that the acts passed in the islands relative to slaves; that the evidence adduced last year on the Slave trade; that the petitions offered in the last session against the Slave-trade; and that the accounts presented to the house, in the last and present session, relative to the exports and imports to Africa, be referred to the same committee.

These motions having been severally agreed to, the house immediately resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, and Sir William Dolben was put into the chair.

Mr. Wilberforce began, by declaring, that, when he considered how much discussion the subject, which he was about to explain to the committee, had occasioned, not only in that house, but throughout the kingdom, and throughout Europe; and when he considered the extent and importance of it, the variety of interests involved in it, and the consequences which might arise, he owned he had been filled with apprehensions, lest a subject of such magnitude and a cause of such weight, should suffer from the weakness of its advocate; but when he recollected, that in the progress of his inquiries, he had every where been received with candour, that most people gave him credit for the purity of his motives, and that, however many of these might then differ from him, they were all likely to agree in the end, he

dismissed his fears, and marched forward with a firm-  
step in this cause of humanity, justice and religion. He  
did not, however, but lament that the subject had excited  
much warmth. He feared that too many on this account,  
but still prepared to consider it with impartiality. He  
related all such to endeavour to be calm and composed.  
A fair and cool discussion was essentially necessary. The  
motion he meant to offer, was as reconcileable to political  
policy, as to national humanity. It belonged to no  
party-question. It would in the end be found serviceable to  
all parties; and to the best interests of the country. He  
did not come forward to accuse the West-India planter, or  
the Liverpool merchant, or indeed any one concerned in  
the traffic; but, if blame attached any where, to take shame  
on himself, in common indeed with the whole parliament of  
Great-Britain, who, having suffered it to be carried on un-  
der their own authority, were all of them participators in  
guilt.

He endeavoured to explain the great business of the day,  
and said he should call the attention of the house only to the  
leading features of the Slave-trade. Nor should he dwell  
upon these. Every one might imagine for himself,  
that it must be the natural consequence of such a commerce  
in Africa. Was it not plain that she must suffer from  
that her savage manners must be rendered still more fer-  
ocious? and that a trade of this nature, carried on round  
the coasts, must extend violence and desolation to her very  
interior? It was well known that the natives of Africa  
were sold as goods, and that numbers of them were continu-  
ously conveyed away from their country, by the owners of  
the shipping vessels. The question then was, which way the  
evil came by them? In answer to this question, the privy  
council-report, which was then on the table, afforded evi-

dence the most satisfactory and conclusive. He had things in it, which had confirmed every proposition he maintained before, whether this proposition had been derived from living information of the best authority, or the histories he had read. But it was unnecessary to quote the report, or to appeal to history on this occasion. Plain reason and common sense, would point out how poor Africans were obtained. Africa was a country divided into many kingdoms, which had different governments and laws. In many parts, the princes were despots; in others they had a limited rule. But in all of them, whether the nature of the government was, men were considered as goods and property, and, as such, subject to plunder, in the same manner as property in other countries. The persons in power there, were naturally fond of our commodities, and to obtain them, which could only be done by the force of their countrymen, they waged war on one another, and ravaged their own country, when they could find no pretence for quarreling with their neighbours: in their absence of law, many poor wretches, who were innocent, were condemned; and, to obtain these commodities in greater quantity, thousands were kidnapped, torn from their families and sent into slavery. Such transactions, he said, were recorded in every history of Africa, and the report on this subject confirmed them. With respect, however, to the trade, he should make but one or two observations. If we go back into the reign of Henry the Eighth, we should find a parallel for one of them. We should find that similar transactions took place; and that penalties followed convicts. With respect to wars, the kings of Africa were not induced to engage in them by public principles, by ambition or glory, and least of all, by the love of their people. This had been stated by those most conversant in the subject.

Dr Spaarman and Mr. Wadstrom. They had conversed with these princes, and had learned from their own mouths, that to procure slaves, was the object of their hostilities. Indeed, there was scarcely a single person examined before the privy council, who did not prove, that the Slave-trade was the source of the tragedies acted upon that extensive continent. Some had endeavoured to palliate this circumstance ; but there was not one, who did not, more or less, admit it to be true. By one, the Slave-trade was called the concurrent cause ; by the majority, it was acknowledged to be the principal motive of the African wars. The same might be said with respect to those instances of treachery and injustice, in which individuals were concerned. And here he was sorry to observe, that our own countrymen were often guilty. He would only at present advert to the tragedy at Calabar, where two large African villages, having been for some time at war, made peace. This peace was to have been ratified by intermarriages ; but some of our captains, who were there, seeing their trade would be stopped for a while, sowed dissention again between them. They actually set one village against the other, took a share in the contest, massacred many of the inhabitants, and carried others of them away as slaves. But, shocking as this transaction might appear, there was not a single history of Africa to be read, in which scenes of as atrocious a nature, were not related. They, he said, who defended this trade, were warped and blinded by their own interests, and would not be convinced of the miseries they were daily heaping on their fellow-creatures. By the countenance they gave it, they had reduced the inhabitants of Africa to a worse state than that of the most barbarous nation. They had destroyed what ought to have been the bond of union and safety among them ; they had set kings against their subjects, and

subjects against each other : they had rendered every private family wretched : they had, in short, given birth to scenes of injustice and misery, not to be found in any other quarter of the globe.

Having said thus much on the subject of procuring slaves in Africa, he would now go to that of the transportation of them. And here he had fondly hoped, that when men, with affections and feelings like our own, had been torn from their country, and every thing dear to them, he should have found some mitigation of their sufferings : but the sad reverse was the case. This was the most wretched part of the whole subject. He was incapable of impressing the house with what he felt upon it. A description of their conveyance was impossible. So much misery, condensed in so little room, was more than the human imagination had ever before conceived. Think only of six hundred persons linked together, trying to get rid of each other, crammed in a close vessel, with every object that was nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling with all the varieties of wretchedness. It seemed impossible to add any thing more to human misery. Yet shocking as this description must be felt to be by every man, the transportation had been described by several witnesses from Liverpool, to be a comfortable conveyance. Mr. Norris had painted the accommodations on board a Slave-ship, in the most glowing colours. He had represented them in a manner which would have exceeded his attempts at praise of the most luxurious scenes. Their apartments, he said, were fitted up as advantageously for them, as circumstances could possibly admit : they had several meals a day ; some, of their own country provisions, with the best sauces of African cookery ; and, by way of variety, another meal of pulse, according to the European taste. After breakfast, they had

water to wash themselves, while their apartments were perfumed with frankincense and lime-juice. Before dinner they were amused after the manner of their country : instruments of music were introduced : the song and the dance were promoted : games of chance were furnished them : the men played and sang, while the women and girls made fanciful ornaments from beads, with which they were plentifully supplied. They were indulged in all their little fancies, and kept in sprightly humour. Another of them had said, when the sailors were flogged, it was out of the hearing of the Africans, lest it should depress their spirits. He by no means wished to say that such descriptions were wilful misrepresentations. If they were not, it proved, that interest or prejudice was capable of spreading a film over the eyes, thick enough to occasion total blindness.

Others, however, and these men of the greatest veracity, had given a different account. What would the house think, when by the concurring testimony of these, the true history was laid open ? The slaves who had been described as rejoicing in their captivity, were so wrung with misery at leaving their country, that it was the constant practice to set sail in the night, lest they should know the moment of their departure. With respect to their accommodation, the right ancle of one was fastened to the left ancle of another, by an iron fetter ; and if they were turbulent, by another on the wrists. Instead of the apartments described, they were placed in niches, and along the decks, in such a manner, that it was impossible for any one to pass among them, however careful he might be, without treading upon them. Sir George Yonge had testified, that in a Slave-ship, on board of which he went, and which had not completed her cargo, by two hundred and fifty, instead of the scent of frankincense being perceptible to the nostrils, the

stench was intolerable. The allowance of water was so deficient, that the slaves were frequently found gasping for life, and almost suffocated. The pulse with which they had been said to be favoured, were absolutely English horse-beans. The legislature of Jamaica, had stated the scantiness, both of water and provisions, as a subject which called for the interference of parliament. As Mr. Norris had said, the song and the dance were promoted, he could not pass over these expressions, without telling the house what they meant. It would have been much more fair, if he himself had explained the word *promoted*. The truth was, that, for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, and oppressed with disease, were forced to dance, by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it. "I," said one of the evidences, "was employed to dance the men, while another person danced the women." Such then was the meaning of the word *promoted*: and it might also be observed with respect to food, that instruments were sometimes carried out, in order to force them to eat; which was the same sort of proof, how much they enjoyed themselves in this instance also. With respect to their singing, it consisted of songs of lamentation for the loss of their country. While they sung, they were in tears: so that one of the captains, more humane probably than the rest, threatened a woman with a flogging, because the mournfulness of her song was too painful for his feelings. Perhaps he could not give a better proof of the sufferings of these injured people, during their passage, than by stating the mortality which accompanied it. This was a species of evidence which was infallible on this occasion. Death was a witness which could not deceive them; and the proportion of deaths, would not only confirm, but, if possible, even aggravate our suspicion of the misery

of the transit. It would be found, upon an average of all the ships, upon which evidence had been given, that, exclusively of such as perished before they sailed from Africa, not less than twelve and a half per cent. died on their passage. Besides these, the Jamaica report stated, that four and a half per cent. died while in the harbours, or on shore, before the day of sale, which was only about the space of twelve or fourteen days after their arrival there ; and one third more died in the seasoning : and this in a climate exactly similar to their own, and where, as some of the witnesses pretended, they were healthy and happy. Thus, out of every lot of one hundred, shipped from Africa, seventeen died, in about nine weeks, and not more than fifty lived to become effective labourers in our islands.

Having advanced thus far in his investigation, he felt, he said, the wickedness of the Slave-trade to be so enormous, so dreadful, and irremediable, that he could stop at no alternative short of its abolition. A trade founded on iniquity, and carried on with such circumstances of horror, must be abolished, let the policy of it be what it might : and he had from this time determined, whatever were the consequences, that he would never rest till he had effected that abolition. His mind had indeed been harrassed by the objections of the West India planters, who had asserted, that the ruin of their property, must be the consequence of such a measure. He could not help, however, distrusting their arguments. He could not believe that the Almighty Being, who had forbidden the practice of rapine and bloodshed, had made rapine and bloodshed necessary to any part of his universe. He felt a confidence in this persuasion, and took the resolution to act upon it. Light indeed soon broke in upon him. The suspicion of his mind was every day confirmed by increasing information, and the evidence

he had now to offer upon this point, was decisive and complete. The principle upon which he founded the necessity of the abolition, was not policy, but justice : but, though justice were the principle of the measure, yet he trusted he should distinctly prove it to be reconcileable with our truest political interest.

In the first place, he asserted, that the number of the slaves in our West India islands, might be kept up, without the introduction of recruits from Africa : and to prove this, he would enumerate the different sources of their mortality. The first was the disproportion of the sexes, there being, upon an average, about five males imported to three females : but this evil, when the Slave-trade was abolished, would cure itself. The second consisted in the bad condition in which they were brought to the islands, and the methods of preparing them for sale. They arrived frequently in a sickly and disordered state, and then they were made up for the market by the application of astringents, washes, mercurial ointments, and repelling drugs, so that their wounds and diseases might be hid. These artifices were not only fraudulent, but fatal : but these, it was obvious, would of themselves fall with the trade. A third was, excessive labour, joined with improper food ; and a fourth was, the extreme dissoluteness of their manners. These also would both of them be counteracted, by the impossibility of getting further supplies : for owners, now unable to replace those slaves whom they might lose, by speedy purchases in the markets, would be more careful how they treated them in future, and a better treatment would be productive of better morals. And here he would just advert to an argument used against those who complained of cruelty in our islands, which was, that it was the interest of masters to treat their slaves with humanity : but surely it was

mediate and present, not future and distant, interest, was the great spring of action in the affairs of man. Why did we make laws to punish men? It was their est to be upright and virtuous: but there was a pre-impulse continually breaking in upon their better judgment: and an impulse, which was known to be contrary to permanent advantage. It was ridiculous to say that would be bound by their interest, when gain or ardent on urged them. It might as well be asserted, that a could not be thrown into the air, or a body move from to place, because the principle of gravitation bound to the surface of the earth. If a planter in the West s, found himself reduced in his profits, he did not usurp of any part of his slaves; and his own gratifications were never given up, so long as there was a possibility of making any retrenchment in the allowance of his s. But to return to the subject which he had left: as happy to state, that as all the causes of the decrease i he had stated, might be remedied, so, by the progress ht and reformation, these remedies had been gradually ing into practice; and that, as these had increased, the ase of slaves had in an equal proportion been lessened. By the gradual adoption of these remedies, he could from the report on the table, that the decrease of i in Jamaica, had lessened to such a degree, that from ar 1774, to the present, it was not quite one in a hundred; and that in fact, they were at present in a state of increase; for that the births in that island, at this moment, led the deaths, by one thousand, or eleven hundred, num. Barbadoes, Nevis, Antigua, and the Bermudere, like Jamaica, lessening their decrease, and holding forth an evident and reasonable expectation of a speedy of increase, by natural population. But allowing

the number of negroes even to decrease for a time, there were methods which would ensure the welfare of the West India islands. The lands there might be cultivated by fewer hands, and this to greater advantage to the proprietors, and to this country, by the produce of cinnamon, coffee, and cotton, than by that of sugar. The produce of the plantations, might also be considerably increased, even in the case of sugar, with less hands than were at present employed, if the owners of them would but introduce machines of husbandry. Mr Long himself, long resident as a planter, had proved, upon his own estate, that the plough, though so little used in the West Indies, did the service of a hundred slaves, and caused the same ground to produce three hogshheads of sugar, which, when cultivated by slaves, would only produce two. The division of work, which, in free and civilized countries, was the grand source of wealth, and the reduction of the number of domestic servants, of whom not less than from twenty to forty were kept in ordinary families, afforded other resources for this purpose. But, granting that all these suppositions should be unfounded, and that every one of these substitutes should fail for a time, the planters would be indemnified, as is the case in all transactions of commerce, by the increased price of their produce in the British market. Thus, by contending against the abolition, they were defeated in every part of the argument. But he would never give up the point, that the number of the slaves could be kept up by natural population, and without any dependence whatever on the Slave-trade. He therefore called upon the house again, to abolish it as a criminal waste of life : it was utterly unnecessary : he had proved it so by documents contained in the report. The merchants of Liverpool, indeed, had thought otherwise, but he should be cautious how he assented to their opinions.

They declared last year, that it was a losing trade, at two slaves to a ton, and yet they pursued it when restricted to five slaves to three tons. He believed, however, that it was upon the whole, a losing concern; in the same manner, as a lottery would be a losing adventure to any company who should buy all the tickets. Here and there an individual gained a large prize, but the majority of adventurers gained nothing. The same merchants, too, had asserted, that the town of Liverpool would be ruined by the abolition. But Liverpool did not depend for its consequence upon the Slave-trade. The whole export-tonnage from that place, amounted to no less than 170,000 tons; whereas the export part of it to Africa, amounted only to 13,000. Liverpool, he was sure, owed its greatness to other and very different causes; the Slave trade bearing but a small proportion to its other trades.

Having gone through that part of the subject which related to the slaves, he would now answer two objections which he had frequently heard started. The first of these was, that the abolition of the Slave-trade, would operate to the total ruin of our navy, and to the increase of that of our rivals. For an answer to these assertions, he referred to what he considered to be the most valuable part of the report, and for which, the house and the country were indebted to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Clarkson. By the report, it appeared that, instead of the Slave-trade being a nursery for British seamen, it was their grave. It appeared that more seamen died in that trade, in one year, than in the whole remaining trade of the country, in two. Out of 910 sailors in it, 216 died in the year, while, upon a fair average of the same number of men employed in the trades to the East and West Indies, Petersburg, Newfoundland, and Greenland, no more than 87 died. It appeared also,

that out of 8470, who had left Liverpool in the slave-ships, in the year 1787, only 1428 had returned. And here, while he lamented the loss which the country thus annually sustained in her seamen, he had additionally to lament the barbarous usage which they experienced, and which this trade, by its natural tendency to harden the heart, exclusively produced. He would just read an extract of a letter from governor Parrey, of Barbadoes, to lord Sydney, one of the secretaries of state. The governor declared he could no longer contain himself, on account of the ill treatment which the British sailors endured at the hands of their savage captains. These were obliged to have their vessels strongly manned, not only on account of the unhealthiness of the climate of Africa, but of the necessity of guarding the slaves, and preventing and suppressing insurrections; and when they arrived in the West Indies, and were out of all danger from the latter, they quarrelled with their men on the most frivolous pretences, on purpose to discharge them, and thus save the payment of supernumerary wages home. Thus many were left in a diseased and deplorable state, either to perish by sickness, or to enter into foreign service; great numbers of whom were for ever lost to their country. The governor concluded by declaring, that the enormities attendant on this trade were so great, as to demand the immediate interference of the legislature.

The next objection to the abolition was, that if we were to relinquish the Slave-trade, our rivals, the French, would take it up; so that, while we should suffer by the measure, the evil would still go on, and this even to its former extent. This was, indeed, a very weak argument; and, if it would defend the continuance of the Slave-trade, might equally be urged in favour of robbery, murder, and every species of wickedness, which, if we did not practise, others

would commit. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that they were to take it up, What good would it do them ? What advantages, for instance, would they derive from this pestilential commerce to their marine ? Should not we, on the other hand, be benefited by this change ? Would they not be obliged to come to us, in consequence of the cheapness of our manufactures, for what they wanted for the African market ? But he would not calumniate the French nation so much as to suppose, that they would carry on the trade, if we were to relinquish it. He believed, on the other hand, that they would abolish it also. Mr. Necker, the present minister of France, was a man of religious principle ; and, in his work upon the administration of the finances, had recorded his abhorrence of this trade. He was happy also to relate an anecdote of the present king of France, which proved that he was a friend to the abolition ; for, being petitioned to dissolve a society, formed at Paris, for the annihilation of the Slave-trade, his majesty answered, that he would not, and was happy to hear that so humane an association was formed in his dominions. And here, having mentioned the society in Paris, he could not help paying a due compliment to that established in London for the same purpose, which had laboured with the greatest assiduity to make this important subject understood, and which had conducted itself with so much judgment and moderation, as to have interested men of all religions, and to have united them in their cause.

There was another topic which he would submit to the notice of the house, before he concluded. They were perhaps not aware, that a fair and honourable trade might be substituted in the natural productions of Africa, so that our connexion with that continent, in the way of commercial advantage, need not be lost. The natives had already made

some advances in it ; and if they had not appeared so forward in raising and collecting their own produce for sale, as in some other countries, it was to be imputed to the Slave-trade : but remove the cause, and Africa would soon emerge from her present ignorant and indolent state. Civilization would go on with her, as well as with other nations. Europe, three or four centuries ago, was in many parts as barbarous as Africa at present, and chargeable with as bad practices. For, what would be said, if, so late as the middle of the thirteenth century, he could find a parallel there for the Slave-trade ? Yes. This parallel was to be found even in England. The people of Bristol, in the reign of Henry the Seventh, had a regular market for children, which were bought by the Irish : but the latter having experienced a general calamity, which they imputed as a judgment from heaven, on account of this wicked traffic, abolished it. The only thing, therefore, which he had to solicit of the house, was to show that they were now as enlightened as the Irish were four centuries back, by refusing to buy the children of other nations. He hoped they would do it. He hoped, too, they would do it in an unqualified manner. Nothing less than a total abolition of the trade, would do away the evils complained of. He would now conclude, by begging pardon of the house for having detained them so long. He could indeed have expressed his own conviction in fewer words. He needed only to have made one or two short statements, and to have quoted the commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder." But he thought it his duty to lay the whole of the case, and the whole of its guilt, before them. They would see now that no mitigations, no palliatives, would either be efficient or admissible. Nothing short of an absolute abolition, could be adopted. This they owed to Africa : they owed it, too, to their own

moral characters. And he hoped they would follow up the principle of one of the repentant African captains, who had gone before the committee of privy-council, as a voluntary witness, and that they would make Africa all the atonement in their power, for the multifarious injuries she had received at the hands of British subjects. With respect to these injuries, their enormity and extent, it might be alleged in their excuse, that they were not fully acquainted with them, till that moment, and therefore not answerable for their former existence: but now they could no longer plead ignorance concerning them. They had seen them brought directly before their eyes, and they must decide for themselves, and must justify to the world, and their own consciences, the facts and principles upon which their decision was formed.

Mr. Wilberforce having concluded his speech, which lasted three hours and a half, read, and laid on the table of the house, as subjects for their future discussion, twelve propositions, which he had deduced from the evidence contained in the privy council-report, and of which the following is the abridged substance:

1. That the number of slaves annually carried from the coast of Africa, in British vessels, was about 38,000, of which, on an average, 22,500 were carried to the British islands, and that of the latter, only 17,500 were retained there.

2. That these slaves, according to the evidence on the table, consisted, first, of prisoners of war; secondly, of free persons sold for debt, or on account of real or imputed crimes, particularly adultery and witchcraft; in which cases they were frequently sold with their whole families, and sometimes for the profit of those by whom they were condemned; thirdly, of domestic slaves sold for the profit of

their masters, in some places at the will of the man and in others, on being condemned by them for real or reputed crimes; fourthly, of persons made slaves by various acts of oppression, violence, or fraud, committed either by the princes and chiefs of those countries on their subjects or by private individuals on each other; or, lastly, by Europeans engaged in this traffic.

3. That the trade so carried on, had necessarily a tendency to occasion frequent and cruel wars among the natives; to produce unjust convictions and punishment pretended or aggravated crimes; to encourage acts of oppression, violence, and fraud, and to obstruct the natural course of civilization and improvement in those countries.

4. That Africa in its present state, furnished several valuable articles of commerce, which were partly peculiar to itself, but that it was adapted to the production of others with which we were now either wholly or in great measure supplied by foreign nations. That an extensive commerce with Africa, might be substituted in these commodities as to afford a return for as many articles as had formerly been carried thither in British vessels: and, lastly, that such a commerce might reasonably be expected to increase the progress of civilization there.

5. That the Slave-trade was peculiarly destructive to the seamen employed in it; and that the mortality there had been much greater than in any British vessels employed on the same coast, in any other service or trade.

6. That the mode of transporting the slaves from Africa to the West Indies, necessarily exposed them to many grievous sufferings, for which no regulations could provide an adequate remedy; and that in consequence thereof a large proportion had annually perished during the voyage.

7. That a large proportion had also perished in the

hours in the West Indies, from the diseases contracted in the voyage, and the treatment of the same, previously to their being sold, and that this loss amounted to four and a half per cent. of the imported slaves.

8. That the loss of the newly imported slaves, within the three first years after their importation, bore a large proportion to the whole number imported.

9. That the natural increase of population among the slaves in the islands, appeared to have been impeded principally by the following causes: First, By the inequality of the sexes in the importations from Africa. Secondly, By the general dissoluteness of manners among the slaves, and the want of proper regulations for the encouragement of marriages, and of rearing children among them. Thirdly, By the particular diseases which were prevalent among them, and which were, in some instances, to be attributed to too severe labour, or rigorous treatment, and in others, to insufficient or improper food. Fourthly, By those diseases, which affected a large proportion of negro children in their infancy, and by those, to which the negroes, newly imported from Africa, had been found to be particularly liable.

10. That the whole number of the slaves in the island of Jamaica, in 1768, was about 167,000, in 1774, about 193,000, and in 1787, about 256,000: that by comparing these numbers with the numbers imported and retained in the said island during all these years, and making proper allowances, the annual excess of deaths above births, was in the proportion of about seven-eighths per cent; that in the first six years of this period, it was in the proportion of rather more than one on every hundred; that in the last 18 years of the same, it was in the proportion of about three-fifths on every hundred; and that a number of slaves, amounting to fifteen thousand, perished during the latter

period, in consequence of repeated hurricanes, and of the want of foreign supplies of provisions.

11. That the whole number of slaves, in the island of Barbadoes, was in the year 1764, about 70,706; in 1774, about 74,874; in 1780, about 68,270; in 1781, after the hurricane, about 63,248, and in 1786, about 62,415: that by comparing these numbers with the number imported into this island, not allowing for any re-exportation, the annual excess of deaths above births, in the ten years from 1764, to 1774, was in the proportion of about five on every hundred; that in the seven years from 1774, to 1780, it was in the proportion of about one and one-third on every hundred; that between the years 1780, and 1781, there had been a decrease in the number of slaves of about five thousand; that in the six years from 1781, to 1786, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than seven-eighths on every hundred; that in the four years from 1783, to 1786, it was in the proportion of rather less than one-third on every hundred; and that, during the whole period, there was no doubt that some had been exported from the island, but considerably more in the first part of this period, than in the last.

12. That the accounts from the Leeward islands, and from Dominica, Grenada, and St. Vincent's, did not furnish sufficient grounds for comparing the state of population in the said islands, at different periods, with the number of slaves which had been from time to time imported there, and exported therefrom; but that from the evidence which had been received respecting the present state of these islands, as well as that of Jamaica and Barbadoes, and from a consideration of the means of obviating the causes, which had hitherto operated to impede the natural increase of the slaves, and of lessening the demand for manual la-

bour, without diminishing the profit of the planters, no considerable or permanent inconvenience would result from discontinuing the further importation of African slaves.

These propositions having been laid upon the table of the house, lord Penrhyn rose in behalf of the planters, and next after him, Mr. Gascoyne, both members for Liverpool, in behalf of the merchants concerned in the latter place. They both joined in asserting, that Mr. Wilberforce had made so many misrepresentations in all the branches of this subject, that no reliance whatever was to be placed on the picture, which he had chosen to exhibit. They should speak however more fully to this point, when the propositions were discussed.

The latter declaration called up Mr. Wilberforce again, who observed, that he had no intention of misrepresenting any fact. He did not know that he had done it in any one instance: but, if he had, it would be easy to convict him out of the report upon the table.


Mr. Burke then rose. He would not, he said, detain the committee long. Indeed he was not able, weary and indisposed as he then felt himself, even if he had an inclination to do it; but as, on account of his other parliamentary duty, he might not have it in his power to attend the business now before them in its course, he would take that opportunity of stating his opinion upon it.

And, first, the house, the nation, and all Europe were under great obligations to Mr. Wilberforce for having brought this important subject forward. He had done it in a manner the most masterly, impressive, and eloquent. He had laid down his principles so admirably, and with so much order and force, that his speech had equalled any thing he had ever heard in modern oratory, and perhaps it had not been excelled by any thing to be found in ancient

times. As to the Slave-trade itself, there could not be opinions about it, where men were not interested. A trade begun in savage war, prosecuted with unheard-of barbaries continued during the transportation with the most cruel and some imprisonment, and ending in perpetual exile and very, was a trade so horrid in all its circumstances, that it was impossible to produce a single argument in its favour. On the ground of prudence, nothing could be said in its defence of it; nor could it be justified by necessity. If necessity alone, that could be brought to justify injury; but no case of necessity could be made out stronger to justify this monstrous traffic. It was therefore the duty of the house to put an end to it, and this without delay. This conviction, that it became them to do immediately, made him regret, and it was the only thing he regretted in the admirable speech he had heard, that his honourable friend should have introduced propositions on this subject. He could have wished that the business had been brought to a conclusion at once, without voting on propositions, which had been read to them. He was never over fond of abstract propositions. They were seldom necessary; and often occasioned great difficulty, embarrassment, and delay. There was besides, no occasion when to assign detailed reasons for a vote, which nature dictated, and which religion enforced. If it should happen that the propositions were not carried in that house, or in any other, such a complication of mischiefs might follow, that might occasion them heartily to lament that they were introduced. If the ultimate resolution should happen to be lost, he was afraid the propositions would pass as waste paper, if not be injurious to the cause at a future time.

And now, as the house must bring this matter to an end, he would beg their attention to a particular point.

treated them to look further than the present moment, and to ask themselves, if they had fortified their minds sufficiently to bear the consequences, which might arise from the abolition of the Slave-trade, supposing they should decide upon it. When they abandoned it, other foreign powers might take it up, and clandestinely supply our islands with slaves. Had they virtue enough to see another country reaping profits, which they themselves had given up ; and to abstain from that envy natural to rivals, and firmly to adhere to their determination ; if so, let them thankfully proceed to vote the immediate abolition of the Slave-trade. But if they should repent of their virtue, and he had known miserable instances of such repentance, all hopes of future reformation of this enormous evil, would be lost. They would go back to a trade they had abandoned with redoubled attachment, and would adhere to it with a degree of avidity and shameless ardour, to their own humiliation, and to the degradation and disgrace of the nation in the eyes of all Europe. These were considerations worth regarding, before they took a decisive step in a business, in which they ought not to move with any other determination than to abide by the consequences at all hazards. The honourable gentleman, who, to his eternal honour, had introduced this great subject to their notice, had, in his eloquent oration, knocked at every door, and appealed to every passion, well knowing that mankind were governed by their sympathies. But there were other passions to be regarded. Men were always ready to obey their sympathies, when it cost them nothing. But were they prepared to pay the price of their virtue on this great occasion ? This was the question. If they were, they would do themselves immortal honour, and would have the satisfaction of having done away a commerce, which, while it was productive of misery not to be



the continuation of the Slave-trade. And, at the same time, that he was willing to listen with candour and attention to every thing, that could be urged on the other side of the question, he was sure that the principles from which his opinion was deduced were unalterable. He had examined the subject with the anxiety which became him, from the happiness and interests of so many thousands concerned, and with the minuteness which would be expected of him, on account of the responsible situation he held; and he averred, that it was sophistry, obscure ideas, and vagueness of reasoning, which alone could hitherto prevented all mankind, those immediately interested in the question excepted, from agreeing in or adopting the same opinion upon the subject. With respect to the propriety of introducing the individual propositions, which had been offered, he differed from Mr. Burke, and he differed from his honourable friend Mr. Wilberforce, for having shown the only way, in which it could be made obvious to the world, that they were warranted on every ground of principle and of fact, in coming to that vote, which he trusted w

of reason, could deny. Let them be once entered in the journals of that house, and it was almost impossible they should fail. The abolition must be voted. As to the mode of it, or how it should be effected, they were not present to discuss it ; but he trusted it would be such, that he could not invite foreign powers to supply our islands with slaves, by a clandestine trade.

After a debt, founded on the immutable principles of justice was found to be due, it was impossible but the country means to cause it to be paid. Should such an illicit trading be attempted, the only language which it became us to adopt was, that Great Britain had resources to enable her to protect her islands, and to prevent that traffic from being clandestinely carried on by them, which she had thought fit, from a regard to her character, to abandon. It was highly becoming Great-Britain to take the lead of other nations in such a virtuous and magnificent measure, and he did not but have confidence, that they would be inclined to share the honour with us, or be pleased to follow us as an example. If we were disposed to set about this glorious work in earnest, they might be invited to concur with us by a negotiation to be immediately opened for that purpose. He would only now observe, before he sat down, in answer to certain ideas thrown out, that he could by no means acquiesce in any compensation for losses, which might be sustained by the people of Liverpool, or by others in any other part of the kingdom, in the execution of this great and necessary undertaking.

Mr William Yonge said, he wanted no inducement to concur with the honourable mover of the propositions, provided the latter could be fairly established, and no serious evils were to arise from the abolition. But he was apprehensive that many evils might follow, in the case of any

sudden or unlooked-for decrease in the slaves. They might be destroyed by hurricanes. They might be swept off by many fatal disorders. In these cases, the owners of them would not be able to fill up their places, and they who had lent money upon the lands, where the losses had happened, would foreclose their mortgages. He was fearful also, that a clandestine trade would be carried on, and then the sufferings of the Africans, crammed up in small vessels, which would be obliged to be hovering about from day to day, to watch an opportunity of landing, would be ten times greater than any which they now experienced in the legal trade. He was glad, however, as the matter was to be discussed, that it had been brought forward in the shape of distinct propositions, to be grounded upon the evidence in the privy council-report.

Mr. Fox observed, that he did not like, where he agreed as to the substance of a measure, to differ with respect to the form of it. If, however, he differed in any thing in the present case, it was with a view rather to forward the business than to injure it, or to throw any thing like an obstacle in its way. Nothing like either should come from him. What he thought was, that all the propositions were not necessary to be voted previously to the ultimate decision, though some of them undoubtedly were. He considered them as of two classes: the one, alleging the grounds upon which it was proper to proceed to the abolition; such as that the trade was productive of inexpressible misery, in various ways, to the innocent natives of Africa; that it was the grave of our seamen; and so on; the other, merely answering objections which might be started, and where there might be a difference of opinion. He was however glad that the propositions were likely to be entered upon the journals; since, if from any misfortune the business should

deffered, it might succeed another year. Sure he was, it could not fail to succeed sooner or later. He highly approved of what Mr. Pitt had said, relative to the language it became us to hold out to foreign powers, in case of a clandestine trade. With respect, however, to the assertion of Sir William Yonge, that a clandestine trade in slaves would be worse than a legal one, he could not admit it. In a trade, if it existed at all, ought only to be clandestine. A trade in human flesh and sinews, was so scandalous, that it ought not openly to be carried on by any government whatever, and much less by that of a Christian country. With regard to the regulation of the Slave trade, he knew of no such thing as a regulation of robbery and murder. There was no medium. The legislature must either abolish it, or plead guilty of all the wickedness which had been shown to attend it. He would now say a word or two with respect to the conduct of foreign nations on this subject. It was possible that these, when they heard that the matter had been discussed in that house, might follow the example, or they might go before us, and set one themselves. If this were to happen, though we might be the losers, humanity would be the gainer. He himself had been obliged sometimes to use expressions relative to France, which were too harsh, and as if he could only treat her as an enemy of this country. Politically speaking, France was our rival. But he well knew the distinction between political enmity, and illiberal prejudice. If there was any great and enlightened nation in Europe, it was France, which was as likely as any country upon the face of the globe, to catch a spark from the light of our fire, and to act on the present subject with warmth and enthusiasm. France had often been improperly stimulated by her ambi-

tion ; and he had no doubt but that, in the present instance, she would readily follow its honourable dictates.

Mr. now lord, Grenville, would not detain the house by going into a question, which had been so ably argued ; but he should not do justice to his feelings, if he did not express publicly to his honourable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, the pleasure he had received from one of the most masterly and eloquent speeches he had ever heard ; a speech, which, while it did honour to him, entitled him to the thanks of the house, of the people of England, of all Europe, and of the latest posterity. He approved of the propositions, as the best mode of bringing this great question to a happy issue. He was pleased also with the language which had been held out with respect to foreign nations, and with our determination to assert our right of preventing our colonies from carrying on any trade, which we had thought it our duty to abandon.

Aldermen Newnham, Sawbridge, and Watson, though they wished well to the cause of humanity, could not, as representatives of the city of London, give their concurrence to a measure, which would injure it so essentially as that of the abolition of the Slave-trade. This trade might undoubtedly be put under wholesome regulations, and made productive of great commercial advantages. But, if it were abolished, it would render the city of London one scene of bankruptcy and ruin. It became the house to take care, while they were giving way to the goodness of their hearts, that they did not contribute to the ruin of the mercantile interests of their country.

Mr. William Smith would not detain the house long, at that late hour, upon this important subject ; but he could not help testifying the great satisfaction he felt, at the manner in which the honourable gentleman, who opened the

debate, if it could be so called, had treated it. He approved of the propositions, as the best mode of bringing the decision to a happy issue. He gave Mr. Fox great credit, for the open and manly way, in which he had manifested his abhorrence of this trade, and for the support he meant to give to the total and unqualified abolition of it; for he was satisfied, that the more it was inquired into, the more it would be found, that nothing short of abolition would cure the evil. With respect to certain assertions of the members for Liverpool, and certain melancholy predictions about the consequences of such an event, which others had held out, he desired to lay in his claim for observation upon them, when the great question should come before the house.

Soon after this the house broke up; and the discussion of the propositions, which was the next parliamentary measure intended, was postponed to a future day, which was sufficiently distant to give all the parties concerned, time to make the necessary preparations for it.

### SECTION III.

Of this interval the committee for the abolition, availed themselves to thank Mr. Wilberforce for the very able and satisfactory manner, in which he had stated to the house, his propositions for the abolition of the Slave-trade, and for the unparalleled assiduity and perseverance, with which he had all along endeavoured to accomplish this object, as well as to take measures themselves for the further promotion of it. Their opponents availed themselves of this interval also. But that, which now embarrassed them, was the evidence contained in the privy council-report. They had no idea, considering the number of witnesses they had sent to be examined, that this evidence, when duly weighed, could by

right reasoning, have given birth to the sentiments, which had been displayed in the speeches of the most distinguished members of the house of commons, or to the contents of the propositions, which had been laid upon their table. They were thunder-struck as it were, by their own weakness: and from this time they were determined, if possible, to get rid of it as a standard for decision, or to interpose every parliamentary delay in their power.

On the twenty-first of May, the subject came again before the attention of the house. It was ushered in, as was expected, by petitions collected in the interim, and which were expressive of the frightful consequences, which would attend the abolition of the Slave-trade. Alderman Newnham presented one from certain merchants in London; alderman Watson another from certain merchants, mortgagees, and creditors of the sugar islands; lord Maitland another from the planters of Antigua; Mr. Blackburne another from certain manufacturers of Manchester; Mr. Gascoyne another from the corporation of Liverpool; and lord Penrhyn others from different interested bodies in the same town.

Mr. Wilberforce then moved the order of the day, for the house to go into a committee of the whole house, on the report of the privy council, and the several matters of evidence already upon the table, relative to the Slave-trade.

Mr. Alderman Sawbridge immediately arose, and asked Mr. Wilberforce, if he meant to adduce any other evidence, besides that in the privy council-report, in behalf of his propositions, or to admit other witnesses, if such could be found, to invalidate them? Mr. Wilberforce replied, that he was quite satisfied with the report on the table. It would establish all his propositions. He should call no witnesses him-

self: as to permission to others to call them, that must be determined by the house.

This question, and this answer, gave birth immediately to great disputes upon the subject. Aldermen Sawbridge, Newnham, and Watson; lords Penrhyn and Maitland; Mr. Gascoyne, Marsham, and others, spoke against the admission of the evidence which had been laid upon the table. They contended, that it was insufficient, defective, and contradictory; that it was *ex parte* evidence; that it had been manufactured by ministers; that it was founded chiefly on hearsay, and that the greatest part of it was false; that it had undergone no cross examination; that it was unconstitutional; and that, if they admitted it, they would establish a dangerous precedent, and abandon their rights. It was urged, on the other hand, by Mr. Courtenay, that it could not be *ex parte* evidence, because it contained testimony on both sides of the question. The circumstance also of its being contradictory, which had been alleged against it, proved that it was the result of an impartial examination. Mr. Fox observed, that it was perfectly admissible. He called upon those, who took the other side of the question, to say why, if it was really inadmissible, they had not opposed it at first. It had now been a long time on the table, and no fault had been found with it. The truth was, it did not suit them, and they were determined by a side-wind, as it were, to put an end to the inquiry. Mr. Pitt observed that, if parliament had previously resolved to receive no evidence on a given subject, but from the privy council, such a resolution indeed would strike at the root of the privileges of the house of commons: but it was absurd to suppose that the house could, upon no occasion, receive evidence, taken where it was most convenient to take it, and subject throughout to new investigation, if any one doubted its va-

lidity. The report of the privy council consisted, first, of calculations and accounts from the public offices, and, secondly, of written documents on the subject; both of which were as authentic, as if they had been laid upon the table at that house. The remaining part of it, consisted of the testimony of living witnesses, all of whose names were published, so that if any one doubted their veracity, it was open to him to re-examine all or each of them. It had been said by the adversaries, that the report on the table was a very imperfect report; but would not these have the advantage of its weakness and imperfection? It was strange, when an honourable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, had said, "Very imperfect as the report may be thought to be, I think it strong enough to bear me out in all my propositions," that they, who objected to it, should have no better reason to offer than this. "We object, because the ground of evidence on which you rest, is too weak to support your cause." It was less than it were meant to say, and the meaning seemed to be thinly disguised, that the house ought to abandon the inquiry, he saw no reason whatever, for not going immediately into a committee; and he wished gentlemen to consider whether it became the dignity of their proceedings, to obstruct the progress of an inquiry, which the house had pledged itself to undertake. Their conduct indeed seemed extraordinary on this occasion. It was certainly singular that, while the report had been five weeks upon the table, no argument had been brought against its sufficiency: that on the moment when the house was expected to vote on an ultimate vote upon the subject, it should be thought defective, contradictory, unconstitutional, and otherwise objectionable. These objections, he was satisfied, neither could originate with the country gentlemen; but

were brought forward, for purposes not now to be concealed, by the avowed enemies of this noble cause.

In the course of the discussion, which arose upon this subject, every opportunity was taken to impress the house with the dreadful consequences of the abolition. Alderman Lawbridge maintained that, if the abolition passed, the Africans, who could not be sold as slaves, would be butchered home; while those, who had been carried to our islands, would be no longer under control. Hence insurrections, and the manifold evils which belonged to them. Alderman Newnham was certain, that the abolition would be the ruin of the trade of the country. It would affect even the land-interest, and the funds. It would be impossible to collect money to diminish the national debt. Every man in the kingdom would feel the abolition come home to him. Alderman Watson maintained the same argument, and pronounced the trade under discussion, to be a merciful and humane trade.\* Compensation was also insisted upon by Mr. Drake, Alderman Newnham, Mr. Henniker, Mr. Cruger, and others. This was resisted by Mr. Burke; who said that compensation in such a case, would be contrary to every principle of legislation. Government gave encouragement to any branch of commerce, while it was regarded as conducive to the welfare of the community, or compatible with humanity and

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\* Every impartial and disinterested person, must be astonished to find such sentiments as these advanced in Parliament, by men who had had the opportunity of examining the volume of evidence, laid on the table of the house of commons, by the committee of privy council: evidence which clearly established the fact, that this trade continued a complication of human misery, without a parallel in the annals of nations; and which demonstrated also that it was as impolitic, as it was inhuman and unjust.

justice. But they were competent to withdraw their countenance from it, when it was found to be immoral, injurious, and disgraceful to the state. They who engaged in it, knew the terms under which they were placed, and adopted it with all the risks with which it was accompanied : and of consequence it was but just, that they should be prepared to abide by the loss which might accrue, when the public should think it right no longer to support it. But such a trade as this, it was impossible any longer to support. Indeed it was not a trade. It was a system of robbery. It was a system, too, injurious to the welfare of other nations. How could Africa ever be civilized under it ? While we continued to purchase the natives, they must remain in a state of barbarism. It was impossible to civilize slaves. It was contrary to the system of human nature. There was no country placed under such disadvantageous circumstances, into which the shadow of improvement had ever been introduced.

In the course of the debate, much warmth of temper was manifested on both sides. The expression of Mr. Fox, in a former debate, " that the Slave-trade could not be regulated, because there could be no regulation of robbery and murder," was brought up, and construed by planters in the house, as a charge of these crimes upon themselves. Mr. Fox, however, would not retract the expression. He repeated it. He had no notion, however, that any individual would have taken it to himself. If it contained any reflection at all, it was on the whole parliament, who had sanctioned such a trade. Mr. Molyneux rose up, and animadverted severely on the character of Mr. Ramsay, one of the evidences in the privy council-report, during his residence in the West-Indies. This called up Sir William Dolben, and Sir Charles Middleton, in his defence, the latter of

whom, bore honourable testimony to his virtues, from an intimate acquaintance with him, and a residence in the same village with him, for twenty years. Mr. Molyneux spoke also, in angry terms of the measure of abolition. 'To annihilate the trade, he said, and to make no compensation on account of it, was an act of swindling. Mr. Macnamara called the measure hypocritical, fanatic, and methodistical. Mr. Pitt was so irritated at the insidious attempt to set aside the privy council-report, when no complaint had been alleged against it before, that he was quite off his guard, and he thought it right afterwards to apologize for the warmth into which he had been betrayed. The Speaker too, was obliged frequently to interfere. On this occasion no less than thirty members spoke. And there had probably been few seasons, when so much disorder had been discoverable in that house.

The result of the debate was, a permission to those interested in the continuance of the Slave-trade, to bring counsel to the bar on the twenty-sixth of May, and then to introduce such witnesses, as might throw further light on the propositions in the shortest time; for Mr. Pitt only acquiesced in this new measure, on a supposition, "that there would be no unnecessary delay, as he could by no means consent to the ultimate procrastination of so important a business." He even hoped, and in this hope he was joined by Mr. Fox, that those concerned, would endeavour to bring the whole of the evidence they meant to offer at the first examination.

On the day appointed, the house met for the purposes now specified: when alderman Newnham, thinking that such an important question should not be decided, but in a full assembly of the representatives of the nation, moved for a call of the house on that day fortnight. Mr. Wilber-

force stated that he had no objection to such a measure ; believing the greater the number present, the more favourable it would be to his cause. This motion, however, produced a debate and a division, in which it appeared that there were one hundred and fifty-eight in favour of it, and twenty-eight against it. The business of the day now commenced. The house went into a committee, and Sir William Dolben was put into the chair. Mr. Sergeant Le Blanc was then called in. He made an able speech in behalf of his clients ; and introduced John Barnes, esquire, as his first witness, whose examination took up the remainder of the day. By this step they, who were interested in the continuance of the trade, attained their wishes, for they had now got possession of the ground with their evidence ; and they knew they could keep it, almost as long as they pleased, for the purposes of delay. Thus they, who boasted, when the privy council examinations began, that they would soon do away all the idle tales, which had been invented against them, and who desired the public only to suspend their judgment, till the report should come out when they would see the folly and wickedness of all our allegations, dared not abide by the evidence, which they themselves had taught others to look up to, as the standard by which they were desirous of being judged : thus they, who had advantages beyond measure, in forming a body of evidence in their own favour, abandoned that, which they had collected. And here it is impossible for me not to make a short comparative statement on this subject, if it were only to show how little can be made out, with the very best opportunities, against the cause of humanity and religion. With respect to ourselves, we had almost all our witnesses to seek. We had to travel after them for weeks together. When we found them, we had scarcely the power of choice.

We were obliged to take them as they came. When we found them, too, we had generally to implore them to come forward in our behalf. Of those so implored, three out of four refused : and the plea for this refusal, was a fear lest they should injure their own interest. The merchants, on the other hand, had their witnesses ready on the spot. They had always ships in harbour containing persons, who had a knowledge of the subject. They had several also from whom to choose. If one man was favourable to their cause, in three of the points belonging to it, but was unfavourable in the fourth, he could be put aside and replaced. When they had thus selected them, they had not to entreat, but to command, their attendance. They had no fear again, when they thus commanded, of a refusal on the ground of interest, because these were promoting their interest, by obliging those who employed them. Viewing these and other circumstances, which might be thrown into this comparative statement, it was some consolation to us to know, amidst the disappointment which this new measure occasioned, and our apparent defeat in the eyes of the public, that we had really beaten our opponents at their own weapons, and that, as this was a victory in our own private feelings, so it was the presage to us of a future triumph.

At length, on the ninth of June, by which time it was supposed that new light, and this in sufficient quantity, would have been thrown upon the propositions, it appeared that only two witnesses had been fully heard. The examinations, therefore, were continued, and they went on till the twenty-third. On this day, the order for the call of the house, which had been prolonged, standing unrepealed, there was a large attendance of members. A motion was then made to get rid of the business altogether, but it failed. It was now seen, however, that it was impossible to bring the question to a final decision in this session, for they, who

were interested in it, affirmed that they had yet many important witnesses to introduce. Alderman Newnham, therefore, by the consent of Mr. Wilberforce, moved, that "the further consideration of the subject be deferred to the next session," which was carried without a division. Thus the great question, for the elucidation of which, all the new evidences were to be heard at the very first examination, in order that it might be decided by the ninth of June, was by the intrigue of our opponents, deferred to another year.

The order of the day for going into the further consideration of the Slave-trade, having been discharged, Sir William Dolben rose to state, that it was his intention to renew his bill of the former year, relative to the conveyance of the unhappy Africans from their own country to the West-Indies, and to propose certain alterations in it. He made a motion accordingly, which was adopted; and he and Mr. Wilberforce, were desired to prepare the same.

This bill he introduced soon afterwards, and it passed; but not without opposition. It was a matter, however, of great pleasure, to find that the worthy baronet was enabled by the assistance of captain, afterwards admiral, Macbride, and other naval officers in the house, to carry such clauses, as provided, in some degree, for the comfort of the poor seamen, who were seduced into this wicked trade. They could not indeed provide against the barbarity of their captains; but they secured them a space under the half deck, in which to sleep. They prescribed a form of muster-rolls, which they were to see, and sign, in the presence of the clearing officer. They regulated their food, both as to kind and quantity; and they preserved them from many of the impositions, to which they had been before exposed.

The committee, at the conclusion of the session of parliament, made a suitable report. It will be unnecessary to detail this, for obvious reasons. There was, however, one thing contained in it, which ought not to be omitted. It stated, with appropriate concern, the death of the first controversial writer, and one of the most able and indefatigable labourers, in their cause. Mr. Ramsay had been for some time indisposed. The climate of the West-Indies, during a residence of twenty years, and the agitation in which his mind had been kept for the last four years of his life, in consequence of the virulent attacks on his word and character, by those interested in the continuance of the trade, had contributed to undermine his constitution. During his whole illness, he was cheerful and composed; nor did he allow it to hinder him, severe as it was, from taking any opportunity which offered of serving those unhappy persons, for whose injuries he had so deeply felt.

Mr. Ramsay was a man of active habit, of diligence and perseverance in his undertakings, and of extraordinary application. He was of mild and humble manners. He possessed a strong understanding, with great coolness and courage. Patriotism and public spirit, were striking traits in his character. In domestic life, he was amiable: in the ministry, exemplary and useful; and he died to the great regret of his parishioners, but most of all, to that of those, who moved with him in his attempts to bring about the important event of the abolition of the Slave-trade.

#### SECTION IV.

We usually find, as we give ourselves up to reflection, some little mitigation of the afflictions we experience; and yet of the evils which come upon us, some are often so hea-

vy as to overpower the sources of consolation for a time, and to leave us wretched. This was nearly our situation at the close of the last session of parliament. It would be idle not to confess, that circumstances had occurred, which wounded us deeply. Though we had foiled our opponents at their own weapons, and had experienced the uninterrupted good wishes and support of the public, we had the great mortification to see the enthusiasm of members of parliament beginning to cool ; to see a question of humanity and justice, for such it was, when it was delivered into their hands, verging towards that of commercial calculation ; and finally to see regulation, as it related to it, in the way of being substituted for abolition.

It was in vain, however, to sink under our burthens. Grief could do no good ; and if our affairs had taken an unfavourable turn, the question was, how to restore them. It was sufficiently obvious that, if our opponents were left to themselves, or, without any counteracting evidence, they would considerably soften down the propositions, if not invalidate them in the minds of many. It seemed therefore necessary, that we should again be looking out for evidence on the part of the abolition.

Mr. Wilberforce, always solicitous for the good of this great cause, was of opinion, that, as commotions had taken place in France, which then aimed at political reforms, it was possible that the leading persons concerned in them might, if an application were made to them judiciously, be induced to take the Slave-trade into their consideration, and incorporate it among the abuses to be done away. Such a measure, if realized, would not only lessen the quantity of human suffering, but annihilate a powerful political argument against us. He had a conference therefore with the committee on this subject, and I was requested to proceed to

France for this purpose. As I had no object in view, but the good of the cause, it was immaterial to me where I went, so I could but serve it, I set out without delay.

I was introduced as quickly as possible, on my arrival at Paris, to the friends of the cause there, to the Duke de la Rochefoucault, the Marquis de Condorcet, Messieurs Pétion de Villeneuve, Claviere, and Brissot, and to the Marquis de la Fayette. The latter received me with peculiar marks of attention. He had long felt for the wrongs of Africa, and had done much to prevent them. He had a plantation in Cayenne, and had devised a plan, by which the labourers upon it should pass by degrees from slavery to freedom. With this view he had there laid it down as a principle, that all crimes were equal, whether they were committed by Blacks or Whites, and ought equally to be punished.

The first public steps taken after my arrival in Paris, were at a committee of the Friends of the Negroes, which was but thinly attended. None of those mentioned, except Brissot, were present. It was resolved there, that the committee should solicit an audience of Mr. Necker; and that I should wait upon him, accompanied by a deputation consisting of the Marquis de Condorcet, Monsieur de Bourge, and Brissot de Warville: Secondly, that the committee should write to the president of the National Assembly, and request the favour of him to appoint a day for hearing the cause of the Negroes.

By an answer received from Mr. Necker, relative to the first of these resolutions, it appeared that the desired interview had been obtained: but he granted it only for a few minutes, and this principally to show his good will to the cause. For he was then so oppressed with business in his own department, that he had but little time for any other.

He wrote to me however, the next day, and desired my company to dinner. He then expressed a wish to me, that any business relative to the Slave-trade might be managed by ourselves as individuals, and that I would take the opportunity of dining with him occasionally for this purpose. By this plan, he said, both of us would save time. Madame Necker also promised to represent her husband, if I should call in his absence, and to receive me, and converse with me on all occasions, in which this great cause of humanity and religion might be concerned.

With respect to the other resolutions, nothing ever came of them; for we waited daily for an answer from the president during the whole of his presidency, but we never received any.

At the next meeting it was resolved, that a letter should be written to the new president for the same purpose as the former. This, it was said, was now rendered essentially necessary. For the silence of the former president, was attributed to the intrigues of the planters' committee. No time, therefore, was to be lost. The letter was accordingly written, but as no answer was ever returned to it, they attributed this second omission to the same cause.

I do not really know whether interested persons ever did, as was suspected, intercept the letters of the committee to the two presidents, or whether they ever dissuaded them from introducing so important a question for discussion, when the nation was in such a heated state; but certain it is, that we had many, and I believe barbarous, enemies to encounter. At the very next meeting of the committee, Claviere produced anonymous letters, which he had received, and in which it was stated that, if the society of the Friends of the Negroes, did not dissolve itself, he and the rest of them would be stabbed. It was said, that no less

than three hundred persons had associated themselves for this purpose. I had received similar letters myself; and on producing mine, and comparing the hand-writing in both, it appeared that the same persons had written them.

In a few days after this, the public prints were filled with the most malicious representations of the views of the committee. One of them was, that they were going to send twelve thousand muskets to the Negroes in St. Domingo, in order to promote an insurrection there. This declaration was so industriously circulated, that a guard of soldiers was sent to search the committee-room; but these were soon satisfied, when they found only two or three books and some waste paper.

On dining one day at the house of the Marquis de la Fayette, I met the deputies of Colour. They had arrived only the preceding day from St. Domingo. I was desired to take my seat at dinner in the midst of them. They were six in number; of a sallow or swarthy complexion, but yet it was not darker than that of some of the natives of the south of France. They were already in the uniform of the Parisian National Guards; and one of them wore the cross of St. Louis. They were men of genteel appearance, and modest behaviour. They seemed to be well informed, and of a more solid cast, than those whom I was in the habit of seeing daily in this city. The account which they gave of themselves, was this. The White People of St. Domingo, consisting of less than ten thousand persons, had deputies then sitting in the National Assembly. The People of Colour, in the same island, greatly exceeded the Whites in number. They amounted to thirty thousand, and were generally proprietors of lands. They were equally free by law with the former, and paid their taxes to the mother country, in an equal proportion. But in consequence of

having sprung from slaves, they had no legislative power, and moreover, were treated with great contempt. Believing that the mother-country was going to make a change in its political constitution, they had called a meeting on the island, and this meeting had deputed them to repair to France, and to desire the full rights of citizens, or that the free People of Colour might be put upon an equality with the Whites. They, the deputies, had come in consequence. They had brought with them a present of six millions of livres to the National Assembly, and an appointment to general la Fayette, to be commander in chief over their constituents, as a distinct body. This command they said the general had accepted, though he had declined similar honours from every town in France, except Paris, in order to show that he patronised their cause.

I was now very anxious to know the sentiments which these gentlemen entertained on the subject of the Slave-trade. I therefore, stated to them at once, the nature of my errand to France, and desired their opinion upon it. This they gave me without reserve. They broke out into lavish commendations of my conduct, and called me their friend. The Slave-trade, they said, was the parent of all the miseries in St. Domingo, not only on account of the cruel treatment it occasioned to the slaves, but on account of the discord which it constantly kept up between the Whites and People of Colour, in consequence of the hateful distinctions it introduced. These distinctions could never be obliterated while it lasted. Indeed both the trade and the slavery must fall, before the infamy, now fixed upon a skin of Colour, could be so done away, that Whites and Blacks could meet cordially, and look with respect upon one another.

But time was flying apace ; I had now been nearly seven weeks in Paris, and had done nothing. The thought of this made me uneasy, and I saw no consoling prospect before me. I found it even difficult to obtain a meeting of the Friends of the Negroes, owing to their other engagements.

From this time, I thought it expedient to depend less upon the committee, and more upon my own exertions, and I formed the resolution of going among the members of the national assembly myself, and of learning, from their own mouths, the hope I ought to entertain relative to the decision of our question. In the course of my endeavours, I obtained a promise from the duke de la Rochefoucault, the comte de Mirabeau, the abbe Syeyes, Monsieur Bergasse, and Monsieur Petion de Villeneuve, five of the most approved members of the national assembly, that they would meet me, if I would fix a day. I obtained a similar promise from the marquis de Condorcet, and Claviere and Brissot, as members selected from the committee of the Friends of the Negroes. Unforeseen circumstances prevented this meeting from taking place. But by watching my opportunities, I obtained the promise of another meeting, which was held afterwards at the duke de la Rochefoucault's. The persons before mentioned were present, except the comte de Mirabeau, whose occupations, at that moment, made it utterly impossible for him to attend.

The duke opened the business in an appropriate manner ; and concluded, by desiring each person to give his opinion frankly and unequivocally, as to what might be expected of the national assembly, relative to the great measure of the abolition of the Slave-trade.

The abbe Syeyes rose up, and said, it would probably bring the business within a shorter compass, if, instead of discussing this proposition at large, I were to put to the

meeting my own questions. I accordingly accepted this offer; and began by asking those present, "how long it was likely that the present national assembly would sit?" After some conversation, it was replied, that, "it would sit till it had completed the constitution, and interwoven such fixed principles into it, that the legislature, which should succeed it, might have nothing more to do, than to proceed on the ordinary business of the state. Its dissolution would probably not take place till the month of March."

I then asked them, "whether it was their opinion, that the national assembly would feel itself authorised to take up such a foreign question, if I might be allowed the expression, as that of the abolition of the Slave-trade?" The answer to this was, "that the object of the national assembly, was undoubtedly the formation of a constitution for the French people. With respect to foreign possessions, it was very doubtful, whether it were the real interest of France, to have any colonies at all. But while it kept such colonies under its dominion, the assembly would feel, that it had the right to take up this question; and that the question itself, would naturally spring out of the bill of rights, which had already been adopted as the basis of the constitution."

The next question I proposed was, "whether they were of opinion, that the national assembly would do more wisely, in the present situation of things, to determine upon the abolition of the Slave-trade now, or to transfer it to the legislature, which was to succeed it in the month of March?"

This question gave birth to a long discussion, during which much eloquence was displayed. But the unanimous answer, with the reasons for it, may be conveyed in substance as follows: "It would be most wise, it was said, in the present assembly, to introduce the question to the notice

e nation; and this as essentially connected with the bill  
 ghts, but to transfer the determination of it, in a way  
 est calculated to ensure success, to the succeeding le-  
 ture. The revolution was of more importance to  
 ehmen, than the abolition of the Slave-trade. To se-  
 this, was their first object, and more particularly, be-  
 e the other would naturally flow from it. But the re-  
 ion might be injured by the immediate determination  
 e question. Many persons in the large towns of Bor-  
 x, Marseilles, Rouen, Nantes, and Havre, who were  
 friends to it, might be converted into enemies. It would  
 be held up by those, who wished to produce a counter-  
 ution, and the ignorant and prejudiced might believe  
 at the assembly had made a great sacrifice to England,  
 us giving her an opportunity of enlarging her trade.

English house of commons, had taken up the subject,  
 ad done nothing. And though they, who were then  
 nt, were convinced of the sincerity of the English min-  
 who had introduced it, and that the trade must ulti-  
 ly fall in England; yet it would not be easy to persuade  
 bigoted persons in France of these truths. It would  
 fore be most wise in the assembly, only to introduce  
 subject as mentioned; but if extraordinary circumstan-  
 should arise, such as a decree, that the deputies of Co-  
 should take their seats in the assembly, or that Eng-  
 should have begun this great work, advantage might  
 ken of them, and the abolition of the Slave-trade might  
 solved upon in the present session."

ie last question I proposed, was this: "If the deter-  
 tion of this great question, should be proposed to the  
 legislature, would it be more difficult to carry it then  
 now?"

This question also produced much conversation. But the answer was unanimous, "that there would be no greater difficulty in the one than in the other case; for that the people would daily, more and more admire their constitution; that this constitution would go down to the next legislature, from whence would issue solid and fixed principles, which would be resorted to as a standard for decision on all occasions. Hence the Slave trade, which would be adjudged by it also, could not possibly stand. Add to which, that the most virtuous members in the present, would be chosen into the new legislature, which, if the constitution were but once fairly established, would not regard the murmurs of any town or province." After this, a desultory conversation took place, in which some were of opinion, that it would be proper, on the introduction of the subject into the Assembly, to move for a committee of inquiry, which should collect facts and documents against the time, when it should be taken up with a view to its final discussion.

As it now appeared to me, that nothing material would be done with respect to our cause, till after the election of the new legislature, I had thoughts of returning to England, to take a journey in quest of evidence; but I judged it right to communicate first with the comte de Mirabeau, and the marquis de la Fayette, both of whom would have attended the meeting just mentioned, if unforeseen circumstances had not prevented them.

On conversing with the first, I found that he differed from those, whom I had consulted. He thought that the question, on account of the nature and urgency of it, ought to be decided in the present legislature. This was so much his opinion, that he had made a determination to introduce it there himself; and had been preparing for his motion.

and already drawn up the outlines of a speech for the day; but was in want of circumstantial knowledge to execute it. With this knowledge he desired me to furnish him.

In conversing with the latter, he said, that he believed those at the meeting, that there would be no greater difficulty in carrying the question in the succeeding, than in the present legislature. But this consideration afforded no argument for the immediate discussion of it: for it could make a considerable difference to suffering humanity, whether it were to be decided now or then. This was the point not to be taken to introduce it; nor did he think that he ought to be deterred from doing it, by any supposed opposition from some of the towns in France. The great majority of the people admired the constitution; and would support any decisions, which were made in strict conformity with its principles. With respect to any committee of inquiry, he deprecated it. The Slave-trade, he said, was not to be defended. It dishonoured the name of commerce. It was contrary to justice. But if so, the question, which it involved, was a question of justice only; and it could not be decided with consistency by any other standard."

The clamour which was now made against the abolition, reached all Paris, and reached the ears of the king. Mr. Neckers had a long conversation with him upon it. The king sent for me immediately. He informed me, that his Majesty was desirous of making himself master of the question, and had expressed a wish to see my *Essay on the Importance of the Slave trade*. He desired to have two copies; one in French and the other in English; and he would take his choice as to which of them he would read.

Mr. Neckers, was to present them. He would take with him also at the same time, the beautiful specimens of

the manufactures of the Africans, which I had lent to dame Necker, out of the cabinet of Monsieur Geoffroy Villeneuve, and others. These articles were at length sent. The king bestowed a good deal of time upon specimens. He admired them; but particularly those of gold. He expressed his surprise at the state of some of the arts in Africa. He sent them back on the same day on which he had examined them, and commissioned Mr. Necker to return me his thanks; and to say that he had been highly gratified with what he had seen; and, with respect to my *Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave-trade*, that he would read it with all the seriousness, which such a subject deserved.

I had sent a letter to the comte de Mirabeau, every day, for a whole month, which contained from sixteen to twenty pages. He usually acknowledged the receipt of each. Hence many of his letters came into my possession. These were always interesting, on account of the richness of the expressions they contained.

When our correspondence was over, I had some conversation with him, relative to fixing a day for the meeting. But he judged it prudent, previously to this, to sound some of the members of the assembly on the subject of it. That he did; but he was greatly disappointed at the result. There was not one member, out of all those, with whom he conversed, who had not been canvassed by the planters committee. And though most of them had been prepared against all its intrigues and artifices, yet many of them hesitated respecting the abolition at that moment. There was a fear in some, that they should injure the revolution by adopting it; others, who had no such fears, wished for the concurrence of England in the measure, and suggested the propriety of a deputation there for that purpose, pre-

ously to the discussion of the question in France. While others maintained, that as England had done nothing, after having had it so long under consideration, it was fair to presume, that she judged it impolitic to abandon the Slave trade ; but if France were to give it up, and England to continue it, how would humanity be the gainer ?

While the comte de Mirabeau was continuing his canvass among the members of the National Assembly, relative to his motion, attempts were again made in the public papers, to mislead them. Emancipation was now stated to be the object of the Friends of the Negroes. This charge I repelled, by addressing myself to Monsieur Beauvet. I explained to him the views of the different societies, which had taken up the cause of the Africans ; and I desired him to show my letter to the planters.

But these letters had only just made their appearance in the public papers, when I was summoned to England. Parliament, it appeared, had met ; and I was immediately to leave Paris.

It was necessary that I should see the comte de Mirabeau, and the Marquis de la Fayette, before I left Paris. I had written to each of them, to communicate the intelligence of my departure, as soon as I received it. The comte, it appeared, had nearly canvassed the Assembly. He could count upon three hundred members, who, for the sake of justice, and without any consideration of policy, or of consequences, would support his motion. But alas ! what proportion did this number bear to twelve hundred ? About five hundred more would support him ; but only on one condition ; which was, if England would give an unequivocal proof of her intention to abolish the trade. The knowledge of these circumstances, he said, had induced him to write a letter to Mr. Pitt. In this he had explained, how

far he could proceed without his assistance, and how far with it. He had frankly developed to him, the mind and temper of the Assembly on this subject; but his answer must be immediate; for the white colonists were daily gaining such an influence there, that he foresaw it would be impossible to carry the measure, if it were long delayed. On taking leave of him, he desired me to be the bearer of the letter, and to present it to Mr. Pitt.

On conversing with the marquis de la Fayette, he lamented deeply the unexpected turn, which the cause of the Negroes had lately taken in the Assembly. It was entirely owing to the daily intrigues of the white colonists. He feared they would ruin every thing. If the deputies of colour had been heard on their arrival, their rights would have been acknowledged. But now there was little probability that they would obtain them. He foresaw nothing but desolation in St. Domingo. The abolition of the Slave-trade, might yet be carried; but not unless England would concur in the measure. On this topic he enlarged with much feeling.

I left France, as it may be easily imagined, much disappointed, that my labours, which had been of nearly six months continuance, should have had no better success; nor did I see, in looking forward, any circumstances that were consoling with respect to the issue of them there.

I had but just arrived in England, when Mr. Wilberforce made a new motion in the house of commons, on the subject of the Slave-trade. In referring to the transactions of the last sessions, he found that twenty-eight days had been allotted to the hearing of witnesses against the abolition, and that eleven persons only had been examined in that time. If the examinations were to go on in the same manner, they might be made to last for years. He resolved

therefore to move, that, instead of hearing evidence in future in the house at large, members should hear it in an open committee above stairs; which committee should sit, notwithstanding any adjournment of the house itself.

One would have thought that a motion, so reasonable and so constitutional, would have met with the approbation of all; but it was vehemently opposed by Mr. Gascoyne, alderman Newnham, and others. The plea set up was, that there was no precedent for referring a question of such importance to a committee. It was now obvious, that the real object of our opponents, in abandoning decision by the privy council evidence, was delay. Unable to meet us there, they were glad to fly to any measure, which should enable them to put off the evil day. After a long debate, the motion of Mr. Wilberforce was voted without a division; and the examination of witnesses, proceeded in behalf of those who were interested in the continuance of the trade.

This measure having been resolved upon, by which dispatch in the examinations was promoted, I was alarmed least we should be called upon for our own evidence, before we were fully prepared. The time which I had originally allotted for the discovery of new witnesses, had been taken up, if not wasted, in France. In looking over the names of the sixteen, who were to have been examined by the committee of privy council, if there had been time, one had died, and eight, who were seafaring people, were out of the kingdom. It was time therefore, to stir immediately in this business. Happily, on looking over my letters, which I found on my arrival in England, the names of several had been handed to me, with the places of their abode, who could give me information on the subject of our question. All these I visited with the utmost dispatch. I was absent only three

weeks. I travelled a thousand miles in this time, conversed with seventeen persons, and prevailed upon three to be examined.

On going into the committee-room of the house of commons, on my return, I found that the examinations were still going on, in behalf of those who were interested in the continuance of the trade; and they went on beyond the middle of April, when it was considered that they had closed. Mr. Wilberforce moved, accordingly, on the twenty-third of the same month, that Captain Thomas Wilson, of the royal navy, and that Charles Berns Wadstrom, and Henry Hew Dalrymple, esquires, do attend as witnesses on behalf of the abolition. There was nothing now but clamour from those on the opposite side of the question. They knew well, that there were but few members of the house of commons, who had read the privy council-report. They knew therefore, that, if the question were to be decided by evidence, it must be decided by that, which their own witnesses had given before parliament. But this was the evidence only on one side. It was certain, therefore, if the decision were to be made upon this basis, that it must be entirely in their favour. Will it then be believed, that in an English house of commons, there could be found persons, who could move to prevent the hearing of any other witnesses on this subject; and, what is more remarkable, that they should charge Mr. Wilberforce, because he proposed the hearing of them, with the intention solely of delay? Yes. Such persons were found, but, happily, only among the friends of the Slave-trade. Mr. Wilberforce, in replying to them, could not help observing, that it was rather extraordinary, that they, who had occasioned the delay of a whole year, should charge him with that of which they themselves had been so conspicuously guilty. He then

commented for some time on the injustice of their motion. He stated too, that he would undertake to remove from disinterested and unprejudiced persons, many of the impressions which had been made by the witnesses against the abolition; and he appealed to the justice and honour of the house, in behalf of an injured people; under the hope, that they would not allow a decision to be made, till they had heard the whole of the case. These observations, however, did not satisfy all those who belonged to the opposite party. Lord Penrhyn contended for a decision, without a moment's delay. Mr. Gascoyne relented, and said, he would allow three weeks to the abolitionists, during which their evidence might be heard. At length the debate ended; in the course of which, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox powerfully supported Mr. Wilberforce; when the motion was negatived without any attempt at a division.

The witnesses in behalf of the abolition of the Slave-trade, now took possession of the ground, which those in favour of it had left.

No less than twenty-four witnesses, altogether, were heard in this session. And here it may not be improper to remark, that during the examination of our own witnesses, as well as the cross-examination of those of our opponents, no council were ever employed. Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. William Smith, undertook this laborious department; and as they performed it with great ability, so they did it with great liberality, towards those who were obliged to come under their notice in the course of this fiery ordeal.

The session was now near its close; and we had the sorrow to find, that the tide ran decidedly against us, upon the general question, in the house of commons. The same statements, which had struck so many members with panic in the former sessions, such as that of emancipation, of the

ruin and massacre of the planters, and of indemnification to the amount of seventy millions, had been industriously kept up, and this by a personal canvass among them. But this hostile disposition, was still unfortunately increased by considerations of another sort. For the witnesses of our opponents had taken their ground first. No less than eleven of them had been examined in the last sessions. In the present, two-thirds of the time had been occupied by others on the same side. Hence the impression upon this ground also was against us; and we had yet had no adequate opportunity of doing it away. A clamour was also raised where we thought it least likely to have originated. They, the planters, it was said, had produced persons in elevated life, and of the highest character, as witnesses; whereas we had been obliged to take up with those of the lowest condition. This outcry was not only ungenerous, but unconstitutional. It is the glory of the English law, that it has no scale of veracity, which it adapts to persons, according to the station, which they may be found to occupy in life. In our courts of law, the poor are heard as well as the rich; and if their reputation be fair, and they stand proof against the cross-examinations they undergo, both the judge and the jury must determine the matter in dispute by their evidence. But the house of commons were now called upon by our opponents, to adopt the preposterous maxim of attaching falsehood to poverty, or of weighing truth by the standard of rank and riches.

But though we felt a considerable degree of pain, in finding this adverse disposition among so many members of the lower house, it was some consolation to us to know, that our cause had not suffered with their constituents, the people. These were still warmly with us. Indeed, their hatred of the trade had greatly increased. Many circumstances had

occurred in this year to promote it. The committee during my absence in France, had circulated the plate of the slave-ship throughout all England.\* No one saw it, but he was impressed. It spoke to him in a language, which was at once intelligible and irresistible. It brought forth the tear of sympathy in behalf of the sufferers, and it fixed their sufferings in his heart. The committee too, had been particularly vigilant during the whole of the year, with respect to the public papers. They had suffered no statement in behalf of those interested in the continuance of the trade, to go unanswered.

But other circumstances occurred, to keep up a hatred of the trade among the people in this interval, which, trivial as they were, ought not to be forgotten. The amiable poet Cowper, had frequently made the Slave-trade the subject of his contemplation. He had already severely condemned it in his valuable poem, *The Task*. But now he had written three little fugitive pieces upon it. Of these, the most impressive was that, which he called *The Negro's Complaint*, and of which the following is a copy :

“ Forc’d from home and all its pleasures,  
Afric’s coast I left forlorn,  
To increase a stranger’s treasures,  
O’er the raging billows borne;  
Men from England, bought and sold me,  
Paid my price in paltry gold;  
But, though theirs they have inroll’d me,  
Minds are never to be sold.

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\* This plate exhibited to the eye a striking picture of the manner in which the poor Africans were stowed in the vessels, in which they were transported from Africa to the islands. L

" Still in thought as free as ever,  
What are England's rights, I ask,  
Me from my delights to sever,  
Me to torture, me to task ?  
Fleecy locks, and black complexion,  
Cannot forfeit Nature's claim ;  
Skins may differ, but affection  
Dwells in black and white the same.

" Why did all-creating Nature  
Make the plant, for which we toil ?  
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,  
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.  
Think, ye masters, iron-hearted,  
Lolling at your jovial boards,  
Think, how many backs have smarted  
For the sweets your cane affords.

" Is there, as you sometimes tell us,  
Is there One, who rules on high ;  
Has he bid you buy and sell us,  
Speaking from his throne, the sky ?  
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,  
Fetters, blood-extorting screws,  
Are the means, which duty urges  
Agents of his will to use ?

" Hark ! he answers. Wild tornadoes,  
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks,  
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,  
Are the voice with which he speaks.  
He, foreseeing what vexations  
Afric's sons should undergo,  
Fix'd their tyrant's habitations  
Where his whirlwinds answer—No.

" By our blood in Afric wasted,  
Ere our necks receiv'd the chain ;

By the miseries, which we tasted  
 Crossing, in your barks, the main ;  
 By our sufferings, since you brought us  
 To the man-degrading mart,  
 All sustain'd by patience, taught us  
 Only by a broken heart :

“ Deem our nation brutes no longer,  
 Till some reason you shall find,  
 Worthier of regard, and stronger,  
 Than the colour of our kind.  
 Slaves of gold ! whose sordid dealings  
 Tarnish all your boasted powers,  
 Prove that you have human feelings,  
 Ere you proudly question ours.”

This little piece, Cowper presented in manuscript to one of his friends in London ; and these, conceiving it to contain a powerful appeal in behalf of the injured Africans, joined in printing it. Having ordered it on the finest letter-pressed paper, and folded it up in a small and neat form, they gave it the printed title of “ A Subject for Conversation at the Tea-table.” After this, they sent many thousand copies of it, in franks, into the country. From one it read to another, till it travelled almost over the whole island. Falling at length into the hands of the musician, it was set to music ; and then it found its way into the streets, both of the metropolis and of the country, where it was sung as a ballad ; and where it gave a plain account of the subject, with an appropriate feeling, to those who heard

#### SECTION V.

It was a matter of deep affliction to us to think, that the pleasures and sufferings inseparable from the Slave-trade,

were to be continued to another year. And yet it was our duty, in the present moment, to acquiesce in the postponement of the question. This postponement was not now for the purpose of delay, but of securing victory. The evidence, on the side of the abolition, was, at the end of the last session, but half finished. It was impossible, for the sake of Africa, that we could then have closed it. No other opportunity might offer in parliament, for establishing an indelible record in her favour, if we were to neglect the present. It was our duty, therefore, even to wait to complete it, and to procure such a body of evidence, as should not only bear us out in the approaching contest, but such as, if we were to fail, would bear out our successors also. In the midst of these thoughts, another journey occurred to me as necessary for this purpose; and I prayed, that I might have strength to perform it in the most effectual manner; and that I might be daily impressed, as I travelled along, with the stimulating thought, that the last hope for millions might possibly rest upon my own endeavours.

The committee highly approved of this journey. Mr. Wilberforce saw the absolute necessity of it also, and had prepared a number of questions, with great ingenuity, to be put to such persons, as might have information to communicate. These I added to those in the tables, which have been already mentioned; and they made together a valuable collection on the subject.

This tour was the most vexatious of any I had yet undertaken; many still refused to come forward to be examined, and some on the most frivolous pretences; so that I was disgusted, as I journeyed on, to find how little men were disposed to make sacrifices for so great a cause. In one part of it, I went over nearly two thousand miles, receiving repeated refusals. I had not secured one witness

within this distance. This was truly disheartening. I was subject to the whims and the caprice of those whom I solicited on these occasions.\* To these I was obliged to accommodate myself. When at Edinburgh, a person who could have given me material information, declined seeing me, though he really wished well to the cause. When I had returned southward as far as York, he changed his mind; and he would then see me. I went back, that I might not lose him. When I arrived, he would give me only private information. Thus I travelled, backwards and forwards, four hundred miles to no purpose. These circumstances I mention, that the reader may be properly impressed with the great difficulties we found in collecting a body of evidence, in comparison with our opponents. No person can indeed judge of the severe labour and trials in these journeys. In the present, I was out four months. I was almost over the whole island. I intersected it backwards and forwards, both in the night and in the day. I travelled nearly seven thousand miles in this time, and I was able to count upon twenty new and willing evidences.

Having now accomplished my object. Mr. Wilberforce moved on the fourth of February, 1791, in the house of commons, that a committee be appointed to examine further witnesses in behalf of the abolition of the Slave-trade. A debate followed, which ended in favour of the motion, and a committee was appointed accordingly.

The examinations began again on February the 7th, and continued till April the fifth, when they were finally closed.

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\* Ten or twelve of those, who were examined, much to their honour, came forward of their own accord.

In this, as in the former session, Mr. Wilberforce and William Smith, principally conducted them : and indeed was necessary that they should have been present at times ; for it is perhaps difficult to conceive the ill manner, in which our witnesses were treated by those the other side of the question. Men, who had left trade upon principle, and who had come forward, against their apparent interest, to serve the cause of humanity, justice, were looked upon as mercenaries and culprits as men of doubtful and suspicious character. They were brow-beaten. Unhandsome questions were put to them. Some were kept for four days under examination. It was however highly to their honour, that they were found in one instance to prevaricate, nor to waver as to the taint of their facts.

The evidence having been delivered on both sides, then printed, it was judged expedient by Mr. Wilberforce seeing that it filled three folio volumes, to abridge it. An abridgement was made by the different friends of the cause. The greater share, however, of the labour fell upon Mr. Dickson. That no misrepresentation of any person's testimony might be made, Matthew Montagu, esquire, and honourable E. J. Elliott, members of parliament, undertook to compare the abridged manuscripts with the original and to strike out or correct whatever they thought to be erroneous, and to insert whatever they thought to have been omitted. The committee, for the abolition, when work was finished, printed it at their own expense. Mr. Wilberforce then presented it to the house of commons, as a faithful abridgement of the whole evidence. Having been received as such, under the guarantee of Mr. Montagu and Mr. Elliott, the committee sent it to every individual member of that house.

The book having been thus presented, and a day fixed for the final determination of the question, our feelings became almost insupportable ; for we had the mortification to find, that our cause was going down in estimation, where it was then most important, that it should have increased in favour. Our opponents had taken advantage of the long delay, which the examination of evidence had occasioned, to prejudice the minds of many of the members of the house of commons against us. The old arguments of emancipation, massacre, ruin, and indemnification, had been kept up : but, as the day of final decision approached, they had been increased. Such was our situation at this moment ; when the current was turned still more powerfully against us, by the peculiar circumstances of the times. It was indeed the misfortune of this great cause, to be assailed by every weapon, which could be turned against it. At this time, Thomas Paine had published his *Rights of Man*. This had been widely circulated. At this time also, the French revolution had existed nearly two years. The people of England had seen, during this interval, a government as it were dissected. They had seen an old constitution taken down, and a new one put up, piece by piece, in its stead. The revolution, therefore, in conjunction with the book in question, had had the effect of producing dissatisfaction among thousands ; and this dissatisfaction was growing, so as to alarm a great number of persons of property in the kingdom, as well as the government itself. Now will it be believed, that our opponents had the injustice to lay hold of these circumstances, at this critical moment, to give a death blow to the cause of the abolition ? They represented the committee, though it had existed before the French revolution, or the *Rights of Man* were heard of, as a nest of Jacobins ; and they held up the cause,

sacred as it was, and though it had the support of the minister, as affording an opportunity of meeting for the purpose of overthrowing the state. Their cry succeeded. The very book of the abridgement of the evidence, was considered by many members, as poisonous as that of the Rights of Man. It was too profane for many of them to touch; and they who discarded it, discarded the cause also.

But these were not the only circumstances which were used as means, at this critical moment, to defeat us. News of the revolution, which had commenced in St. Domingo, in consequence of the disputes between the whites and the people of colour, had, long before this, arrived in England. The horrible scenes which accompanied it, had been frequently published as so many arguments against our cause. In January, new insurrections were announced as having happened in Martinique. The Negroes there, were described as armed, and the planters as having abandoned their estates, for fear of massacre. Early in the month of March, insurrections in the smaller French islands, were reported. Every effort was then made, to represent these as the effects of the new principles of liberty, and of the cry for abolition. Thus, under a combination of effects, arising from the publication of the Rights of Man, the rise and progress of the French revolution, and the insurrections of the Negroes in the different islands, no one of which events had any thing to do with the abolition of the Slave trade, the current was turned against us; and in this unfavourable frame of mind, many members of parliament went into the house, on the day fixed for the discussion, to discharge their duty with respect to this great question.

On the eighteenth of April, Mr. Wilberforce made his motion. He began by expressing a hope, that the present debate, instead of exciting asperity, and confirming preju-

dice, would tend to produce a general conviction of the truth of what, in fact, was incontrovertible; that the abolition of the Slave-trade, was indispensably required of them, not only by morality and religion, but by sound policy. He stated, that he should argue the matter from evidence. He adverted to the character, situation, and means of information of his own witnesses: and having divided his subject into parts, the first of which related to the manner of reducing the natives of Africa to a state of slavery, he handled it in the following manner.

He would begin, he said. with the first boundary of the trade. Captain Wilson and captain Hills, of his majesty's navy. and Mr. Dalrymple, of the land service. had concurred in stating, that in the country contiguous to the river Senegal. when slave-ships arrived there, armed parties were regularly sent out in the evening, who scoured the country, and brought in their prey. The wretched victims were to be seen in the morning, bound back to back, in the huts on shore, whence they were conveyed, tied hand and foot, to the slave-ships. The design of these ravages was obvious, because, when the Slave-trade was stopped, they ceased. Mr. Kiernan spoke of the constant depredations by the Moors to procure slaves. Mr. Wadstrom confirmed them. The latter gentleman showed also, that they were excited by presents of brandy, gunpowder, and such other incentives; and that they were not only carried on by one community against another; but that the kings were stimulated to practise them, in their own territories, and on their own subjects: and in one instance, a chieftain, who, when intoxicated, could not resist the demands of the slave-merchants, had expressed, in a moment of reason, a due sense of his own crime, and had reproached his christian seducers. Abundant also were the instances of private rapine. Indi-

viduals were kidnapped, whilst in their fields and gardens. There was an universal feeling of distrust and apprehension there. The natives never went any distance from home, without arms ; and when captain Wilson asked them the reason of it, they pointed to a slave-ship then lying within sight.

On the windward coast, it appeared from lieutenant Story and Mr. Bowman, that the evils just mentioned, existed, if possible, in a still higher degree. They had seen the remains of villages, which had been burnt, whilst the fields of corn were still standing beside them, and every other trace of recent desolation. Here an agent was sent to establish a settlement in the country, and to send to the ships such slaves as he might obtain. The orders he received from his captain were, that " he was to encourage the chieftains, by brandy and gunpowder, to go to war, to make slaves." This he did. The chieftains performed their part in return. The neighbouring villages were surrounded, and set on fire in the night. The inhabitants were seized, when making their escape ; and, being brought to the agent, were by him forwarded to his principal on the coast. Mr. How, a botanist in the service of government, stated, that on the arrival of an order for slaves, from Cape Coast Castle, while he was there, a native chief immediately sent forth armed parties, who brought in a supply of all descriptions in the night.

But it was not only by acts of outrage, that the Africans were brought into bondage. The very administration of justice, was turned into an engine for that end. The smallest offence was punished by a fine equal to the value of a slave. Crimes were also fabricated ; false accusations were resorted to ; and persons were sometimes employed to

seduce the unwary into practices, with a view to the conviction and the sale of them.

It was another effect of this trade, that it corrupted the morals of those who carried it on. Every fraud was used to deceive the ignorance of the natives, by false weights and measures, adulterated commodities, and other impositions of a like sort. These frauds were even acknowledged by many, who had themselves practised them, in obedience to the orders of their superiors. For the honour of the mercantile character of the country, such a traffic ought immediately to be suppressed.

He would now go to a new part of the subject. An opinion had gone forth that the abolition of the trade would be the ruin of the West India islands. He trusted he should prove that the direct contrary was the truth; though, had he been unable to do this, it would have made no difference as to his own vote.

He wished to treat the West Indians with all possible candour; but he was obliged to confess, in arguing upon these points, that whatever splendid instances there might be of kindness towards their slaves, there were some evils of almost universal operation, which were necessarily connected with the system of slavery. Above all, the state of degradation, to which they were reduced, deserved to be noticed, as it produced an utter inattention to them as moral agents. They were kept at work, under the whip, like cattle. They were left totally ignorant of morality and religion. There was no regular marriage among them. Hence promiscuous intercourse, early prostitution, and excessive drinking, were material causes of their decrease. With respect to the instruction of the slaves in the principles of religion, the happiest effects had resulted, particularly in Antigua, where, under the Moravians and Metho-

dists, they had so far profited. that the planters themselves confessed their value, as property had been raised one-third, by their increased habits of regularity and industry.

Whatever might have been said to the contrary, it was plainly to be inferred from the evidence, that the slaves were not protected by law. Colonial statutes had indeed been passed ; but they were a dead letter ; since, however ill they were treated, they were not considered as having a right to redress.

It was also in evidence, that they were in general underfed. They were supported partly by the produce of their own provision-ground, and partly by an allowance of flour and grain from their masters. In one of the islands, where provision-ground did not answer one year in three, the allowance to a working Negro, was but from five to nine pints of grain per week : in Dominica, where it never failed, from six to seven quarts : in Nevis and St. Christophers, where there was no provision-ground, it was but eleven pints. Add to this, that it might be still less, as the circumstances of their masters, might become embarrassed ; and in this case, both an abridgement of their food, and an increase of their labour, would follow.

But he must contend, in addition to this, that the object of keeping up the stock of slaves by breeding, had never been seriously attended to. For this, he might appeal both to his own witnesses, and to those of his opponents ; but he would only notice one fact. It was remarkable that, when owners and managers were asked about the produce of their estates, they were quite at home as to the answer ; but when they were asked about the proportion of their male and female slaves, and their infants, they knew little about the matter. Even medical men were adepts in the art of planting ; but when they were asked the latter questions,

as connected with breeding and rearing, they seemed quite amazed, and could give no information upon the subject of them.

It had been said, that the Negroes were happier as slaves, than they would be, if they were to be made free. But how was this reconcileable with facts? If a Negro, under extraordinary circumstances, had saved money enough, did not he always purchase his release from this situation of superior happiness, by the sacrifice of his last shilling? Was it not also notorious, that the greatest reward, which a master thought he could bestow upon his slave for long and faithful services, was his freedom?

It had been said again, that Negroes, when made free, never returned to their own country. But was not the reason obvious? If they could even reach their own homes in safety, their kindred and connexions might be dead. But would they subject themselves to be kidnapped again; to be hurried once more on board a slave-ship; and again to endure and survive the horrors of the passage? Yet the love of their native country had been proved beyond a doubt. Many of the witnesses had heard them talk of it, in terms of the strongest affection. Acts of suicide, too, were frequent in the islands, under the notion that these afforded them the readiest means of getting home.

He had now, he said, made good his first proposition, That in the condition of the slaves, there were causes, which should lead us to expect, that there would be a considerable decrease among them.

He would now proceed to establish his second proposition, that from henceforth a very considerable increase might be expected. This he might support by a close reasoning upon the preceding facts. But the testimony of his opponents, furnished him with sufficient evidence.

He could show, that wherever the slaves were treated better than ordinary, there was uniformly an increase in their number. Look at the estates of Mr. Willock, Mr. Ottley, Sir Ralph Payne, and others. In short, he should weary the committee, if he were to enumerate the instances of plantations, which were stated in the evidence to have kept up their numbers, only from a little variation in their treatment. A remedy also had been lately found for a disorder, by which vast numbers of infants had been formerly swept away. Mr. Long also had laid it down, that whenever the slaves should bear a certain proportion to the produce, they might be expected to keep up their numbers; but this proportion they now exceeded.

But the increase of the Negroes, where their treatment was better than ordinary, was confirmed in the evidence, by instances in various parts of the world. From one end of the continent of America, to the other, their increase had been undeniably established, and this to a prodigious extent, though they had to contend with the severe cold of the winter, and in some parts with noxious exhalations in the summer. This was the case also in the settlement of Bencoolen, in the East-Indies. It appeared, from the evidence of Mr. Botham, that a number of Negroes, who had been imported there, in the same disproportion of the sexes, as in West-India cargoes, and who lived under the same disadvantages, as in the Islands, of promiscuous intercourse and general prostitution, began, after they had been settled a short time, annually to increase.

But to return to the West Indies. A slave-ship had been many years ago wrecked near St. Vincent's. The slaves on board, who escaped to the island, were without necessaries; and, besides, were obliged to maintain a war with the native Caribbs; yet they soon multiplied to an as-

tonishing number ; and, according to Mr. Ottley, they were now on the increase. From Sir John Dalrymple's evidence, it appeared, that the domestic slaves in Jamaica, who were less worked than those in the field, increased ; and from Mr. Long, that the free Blacks and Mulattoes there, increased also.

He would now speak of the consequences of the abolition of the Slave-trade, in other points of view ; and first, as to its effects upon our marine. An abstract of the Bristol and Liverpool muster-rolls, had been just laid before the house. It appeared from this, that in three hundred and fifty slave-vessels, having on board twelve thousand two hundred and sixty-three persons, two thousand six hundred and forty-three. were lost in twelve months ; whereas in four hundred and sixty-two West-Indiamen, having on board seven thousand six hundred and forty persons, one hundred and eighteen only were lost in seven months. This rather exceeded the losses stated by Mr. Clarkson. For their barbarous usage on board these ships, and for their sickly and abject state in the West-Indies, he would appeal to governor Parry's letter ; to the evidence of Mr. Ross ; to the assertion of Mr. B. Edwards, an opponent ; and to the testimony of captains Sir George Yonge & Thompson, of the royal navy. He would appeal also to what captain Hall, of the navy, had given in evidence. This gentleman, after the action of the twelfth of April, impressed thirty hands from a slave-vessel, whom he selected, with the utmost care, from a crew of seventy ; and he was reprimanded by his admiral, though they could scarcely get men to bring home the prizes, for introducing such wretches to communicate disorders to the fleet. Captain Smith, of the navy, had also declared, that when employed to board Guineamen to impress sailors, although he had examined near twenty vessels, he never was

able to get more than two men, who were fit for service: and these turned out such inhuman fellows, although good seamen, that he was obliged to dismiss them from the ship.

He would mention a cause of mortality, by which many of the seamen lost their lives. In looking over Lloyd's list, no less than six vessels were cut off by the irritated natives in one year, and the crews massacred. Such instances were not unfrequent. In short, the history of this commerce, was written throughout in characters of blood.

He would next consider the effects of the abolition on those places where it was chiefly carried on. But would the committee believe, after all the noise which had been made on this subject, that the Slave-trade composed but a thirtieth part of the export trade of Liverpool, and that of the trade of Bristol, it constituted a still less proportion? For the effects of the abolition, on the general commerce of the kingdom, he would refer them to Mr. Irving; from whose evidence it would appear, that the medium value of the British manufactures, exported to Africa, amounted only to between four and five hundred thousand pounds annually. This was but a trifling sum. Surely the superior capital, ingenuity, application, and integrity, of the British manufacturer, would command new markets for the produce of his industry, to an equal amount, when this should be no more.

He doubted, whether it was not almost an act of degrading condescension, to stoop to discuss the question in the view of commercial interest. On this ground, however, he was no less strong than on every other. Africa abounded with productions of value, which she would gladly exchange for our manufactures, when these were not otherwise to be obtained; and to what an extent her demand might then grow, exceeded almost the powers of computation. One

instance already existed of a native king, who being debarr'd by his religion, the use of spirituous liquors, and therefore not feeling the irresistible temptation to acts of rapine, which they afforded to his countrymen, had abolished the Slave trade throughout all his dominions, and was encouraging an honest industry.

For his own part, he declared that, interested as he might be supposed to be in the final event of the question, he was comparatively indifferent as to the present decision of the house upon it. Whatever they might do, the people of Great-Britain, he was confident, would abolish the Slave-trade, when, as would then soon happen, its injustice and cruelty should be fairly laid before them. It was a nest of serpents, which would never have existed so long, but for the darkness in which they lay hid. The light of day would now be let in upon them, and they would vanish from the sight. For himself, he declared he was engaged in a work, which he would never abandon. The consciousness of the justice of his cause, would carry him forward, though he were alone; but he could not but derive encouragement from considering with whom he was associated. Let us not, he said, despair. It is a blessed cause; and success, ere long, will crown our exertions. Already we have gain'd one victory. We have obtained for these poor creatures, the recognition of their human nature,\* which for a while, was most shamefully denied them. This is the first fruits of our efforts. Let us persevere, and our triumph will be

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\* This point was actually obtained by the evidence before the House of commons; for, after this, we heard no more of them as an inferior race.

complete. Never, never, will we desist, till we have wiped away this scandal from the christian name ; till we have released ourselves from the load of guilt under which we at present labour ; and till we have extinguished every trace of this bloody traffic, which our posterity, looking back to the history of these enlightened times, will scarcely believe had been suffered to exist so long, a disgrace and a dishonour to our country.

He then moved, that the chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in a bill, to prevent the further importation of slaves, into the British colonies in the West-Indies.

Colonel Tarleton immediately rose up, and began by giving an historical account of the trade, from the reign of Elizabeth, to the present time. He then proceeded to the sanction, which parliament had always given it. Hence it could not then be withdrawn, without a breach of faith. Hence, also, the private property embarked in it was sacred : nor could it be invaded, unless an adequate compensation were given in return.

They, who had attempted the abolition of the trade, were led away by a mistaken humanity. The Africans themselves, had no objection to its continuance.

With respect to the middle passage, he believed the mortality there to be on an average only five in the hundred ; whereas in regiments, sent out to the West Indies, the average loss in the year was about ten and a half per cent.

The Slave trade was absolutely necessary, if we meant to carry on our West India commerce ; for many attempts had been made to cultivate the lands, in the different islands, by white labourers ; but they had always failed.

It had also the merit of keeping up a number of seamen in readiness for the state.\* Lord Rodney had stated this,

\* It must appear surprising to the candid observer, that this argu-

as one of its advantages on the breaking out of a war. Liverpool alone, could supply nine hundred and ninety-three seamen annually.

To members of landed property, he would observe, that the abolition would lessen the commerce of the country, and increase the national debt, and the number of their taxes. The minister, he hoped, who patronized this wild scheme, had some new pecuniary resource in store, to supply the deficiencies it would occasion.

These things being considered, he should certainly oppose the measure in contemplation.

Mr. Grosvenor then rose. He complimented the humanity of Mr. Wilberforce, though he differed from him on the subject of his motion. He himself, had read only the privy council report; and he wished for no other evidence. The question had then been delayed two years. Had the abolition been so clear a point, as it was said to be, it could not have needed either so much evidence or time.

He had heard a good deal about kidnapping, and other barbarous practices. He was sorry for them. But these were the natural consequences of the laws of Africa; and it became us, as wise men, to turn them to our own advantage. The Slave-trade was certainly not an amiable trade. Neither was that of a butcher; but yet it was a very necessary one.



ment should be urged in parliament, that this trade was a nursery for the marine, after such clear and conclusive evidence had been produced, of its destructive and demoralizing effect upon the seamen employed in it. Reason and evidence, the essential basis of every correct proposition, seem to have little, or no influence over the minds of those, whose prejudices have clouded their understandings, and perverted their reasoning powers.

L

Y

There was great reason to doubt the propriety of the present motion. He had twenty reasons for disapproving it. The first was, that the thing was impossible. He needed not therefore give the rest. Parliament, indeed, might relinquish the trade. But to whom? To foreigners, who would continue it, and without the humane regulations, which were applied to it by his countrymen.

Mr. James Martin succeeded Mr. Grosvenor. He said, he had been long aware, how much self-interest could pervert the judgment; but he was not apprised of the full power of it, till the Slave-trade became a subject of discussion. He had always conceived, that the custom of trafficking in human beings, had been incautiously begun, and without any reflection upon it; for he never could believe that any man, under the influence of moral principles, could suffer himself, knowingly, to carry on a trade replete with fraud, cruelty, and destruction; with destruction indeed, of the worst kind, because it subjected the sufferers to a lingering death. But he found now, that even such a trade as this could be sanctioned.

It was well observed in the petition from the University of Cambridge, against the Slave-trade, "that a firm belief in the Providence of a benevolent Creator, assured them that no system, founded on the oppression of one part of mankind, could be beneficial to another." He felt much concern, that in an assembly of the representatives of a country, boasting itself zealous not only for the preservation of its own liberties, but for the general rights of mankind, it should be necessary to say a single word upon such a subject; but the deceitfulness of the human heart was such, as to change the appearances of truth, when it stood in opposition to self-interest. And he had to lament, that even among those, whose public duty it was to cling to the

universal and eternal principles of truth, justice, and humanity, there were found some, who could defend that which was unjust, fraudulent and cruel.

The doctrines he had heard that evening, ought to have been reserved for times the most flagrantly profligate and abandoned. He never expected then to learn, that the everlasting laws of righteousness, were to give way to imaginary, political, and commercial expediency; and that thousands of our fellow-creatures were to be reduced to wretchedness, that individuals might enjoy opulence, or government a revenue.

He hoped that the house, for the sake of its own character, would explode these doctrines with all the marks of odium they deserved; and that all parties would join in giving a death-blow to this execrable trade.

It had been frequently, but most disgracefully said, that "we should not be too eager in setting the example. Let the French begin it." Such a sentiment was a direct libel upon the ancient, noble, and generous character of this nation. We ought, on the other hand, under the blessings we enjoyed, and under the high sense we entertained of our own dignity as a people, to be proudly fearful, lest other nations should anticipate our design, and obtain the palm before us. It became us to lead. And if others should not follow us, it would belong to them to glory in the shame of trampling under foot the laws of reason, humanity, and religion.

Mr. Francis rose. After complimenting Mr. Wilberforce, he stated that personal considerations might appear to incline him to go against the side which he was about to take, namely, that of strenuously supporting his motion. Having himself an interest in the West Indies, he thought that what he should submit to the house, would have the

double effect of evidence and argument ; and he stated most unequivocally his opinion, that the abolition of the Slave-trade, would tend materially to the benefit of the West Indies.

The arguments urged by the honourable mover, were supported by the facts, which he had adduced from the evidence, more strongly than any arguments had been supported in any speech he had ever heard. He wished, however, that more of these facts had been introduced into the debate ; for they were apt to have a greater effect upon the mind, than mere reasonings, however just and powerful. Many had affirmed, that the Slave-trade was politic and expedient ; but it was worthy of remark, that no man had ventured to deny that it was criminal. Criminal, however, he declared it to be in the highest degree ; and he believed it was equally impolitic. Both its inexpediency and injustice, had been established by the honourable mover. He dwelt much on the unhappy situation of the Negroes in the West Indies, who were without the protection of government, or of efficient laws, and subject to the mere caprice of men, who were at once the parties, the judges, and the executioners.

He instanced an overseer, who, having thrown a Negro into a copper of boiling cane-juice, for a trifling offence, was punished merely by the loss of his place, and by being obliged to pay the value of the slave. He stated another instance of a girl of fourteen, who was dreadfully whipped for coming too late to her work. She fell down motionless after it ; and was then dragged along the ground, by the legs, to an hospital, where she died. The murderer, though tried, was acquitted by a jury of his peers, upon the idea, that it was impossible a master could destroy his own property. This was a notorious fact. It was published in the

Jamaica Gazette; and it had even happened since the question of the abolition had been started.

Mr. Pitt rose; but he said it was only to move, seeing that justice could not be done to the subject this evening, that the further consideration of the question might be adjourned to the next.

Mr. Cawthorne and colonel Tarleton, both opposed this motion, and colonel Phipps and lord Carthampton supported it.

The motion of Mr. Pitt, however, was assented to, and the house was adjourned accordingly.

On the next day the subject was resumed. Sir William Yonge rose, and said that, though he differed from the honourable mover, he had much admired his speech of the last evening. Indeed the recollection of it, made him only the more sensible of the weakness of his own powers: and yet, having what he supposed to be irrefragable arguments in his possession, he felt emboldened to proceed.

And, first, before he could vote for the abolition, he wished to be convinced, that, whilst Britain were to lose, Africa would gain. As for himself, he hated a traffic in men, and joyfully anticipated its termination at no distant period, under a wise system of regulation: but he considered the present measure as crude and indolent; and as precluding better and wiser measures, which were already in train. A British parliament should attain not only the best ends, but by the wisest means.

Great Britain might abandon her share of this trade, but she could not abolish it. Parliament was not an assembly of delegates from the powers of Europe, but of a single nation. It could not therefore suppress the trade; but would eventually aggravate those miseries incident to it, which every enlightened man must acknowledge, and every

good man must deplore. He wished the traffic for ever closed. But other nations were only waiting for our decision, to seize the part we should leave them. The new projects of these would be intemperate; and, in the zeal of rivalry, the present evils of comparatively sober dealing, would be aggravated, beyond all estimate, in this new and heated auction of bidders for life and limb. We might indeed, by regulation, give an example of new principles of policy and of justice; but if we were to withdraw suddenly from this commerce, like Pontius Pilate, we should wash our hands indeed, but we should not be innocent as to the consequences,

On the first agitation of this business, Mr. Wilberforce had spoken confidently of other nations following our example. But had not the national assembly of France, referred the Slave-trade to a select committee; and had not that committee rejected the measure of its abolition? By the evidence it appeared, that the French and Spaniards were then giving bounties to the Slave-trade; that Denmark was desirous of following it; that America was encouraging it; and that the Dutch had recognized its necessity, and recommended its recovery. Things were bad enough indeed, as they were, but he was sure this rivalry would make them worse.

In regard to the colonies, a sudden abolition would be oppression. The legislatures there should be led, and not forced, upon this occasion. He was persuaded they would act wisely, to attain the end pointed out to them. They would see, that a natural increase of their Negroes, might be effected by an improved system of legislation; and that in the result, the Slave-trade would be no longer necessary.

A sudden abolition, also, would occasion dissatisfaction there. Supplies were necessary for some time to come.

The Negroes did not yet generally increase by birth. The gradation of ages was not yet duly filled. These, and many defects, might be remedied, but not suddenly.

Mr. Matthew Montagu rose, and said a few words in support of the motion; and after condemning the trade in the strongest manner, he declared, that as long as he had life, he would use every faculty of his body and mind, in endeavouring to promote its abolition.

Lord John Russel succeeded Mr. Montagu. He said, that although slavery was repugnant to his feelings, he must vote against the abolition, as *visionary* and *delusive*. It was a feeble attempt, without the power to serve the cause of humanity. Other nations would take up the trade. Whenever a bill of wise regulation should be brought forward, no man would be more ready than himself, to lend his support. In this way, the rights of humanity might be asserted, without injury to others. He hoped he should not incur censure by his vote; for, let his understanding be what it might, he did not know that he had, notwithstanding the assertions of Mr. Fox, an inaccessible heart.

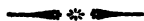
Mr. Stanley, agent for the islands, rose next. He felt himself called upon, he said, to refute the many calumnies, which had for years been propagated against the planters, even through the medium of the pulpit, which should have been employed to better purposes, and which had at length produced the *mischievous* measure, which was now under the discussion of the house. A cry had been sounded forth, and from one end of the kingdom to the other; as if there had never been a slave from Adam to the present time. But it appeared to him to have been the intention of Providence, from the very beginning, that one set of men should be slaves to another. 'This truth was as old as it was universal. It was recognized in every history, under every

government, and in every religion. Nor did the Christian religion itself, if the comments of Dr. Halifax, Bishop of Gloucester, on a passage in St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, were true, show more repugnance to slavery than any other.

He denied that the slaves were procured in the manner which had been described. It was the custom of all savages to kill their prisoners; and the Africans ought to be thankful that they had been carried safe into the British colonies.

As to the tales of misery in the middle passage, they were gross falsehoods;\* and as to their treatment in the West Indies, he knew personally that it was, in general, indulgent and humane.

Mr. William Smith rose. He wondered how the last speaker could have had the boldness to draw arguments from scripture in support of the Slave-trade. Such arguments could be intended only to impose on those, who never took the trouble of thinking for themselves. Could it be thought for a moment, that the good sense of the house could be misled by a few perverted or misapplied passages, in direct opposition to the whole tenor and spirit of Christianity; to the theory, he might say, of almost every religion, which had ever appeared in the world? Whatever might have been advanced, every body must feel, that the Slave-trade could not exist an hour, if that excellent maxim, "to do to others as we would wish that others should do to us," had its proper influence on the conduct of men.



\* The misery and mortality of the middle passage, had been clearly proven, and the truth of those "tales" which are here termed "gross falsehoods," fairly established, by the evidence then on the table of the house of commons.

Nor was Mr. Stanley more happy in his argument of the antiquity and universality of slavery. Because a practice had existed, did it necessarily follow, that it was just ? By this argument, every crime might be defended from the time of Cain. The slaves of antiquity, however, were in a situation far preferable to that of the Negroes in the West Indies. A passage in Macrobius, which exemplified this in the strongest manner, was now brought to his recollection. "Our ancestors," says Macrobius, "denominated the master, father of the family, and the slave, domestic, with the intention of removing all odium from the condition of the master, and all contempt from that of the servant." Could this language be applied to the present state of West India slavery ?

It had been complained of by those who supported the trade, that they laboured under great disadvantages, by being obliged to contend against the most splendid abilities which the house could boast. But he believed they laboured under one, which was worse, and for which no talents could compensate ; he meant the impossibility of maintaining their ground fairly on any of those principles, which every man within those walls had been accustomed, from his infancy, to venerate as sacred. He and his friends too laboured under some disadvantages. They had been charged with fanaticism.

But they had to struggle with difficulties far more serious. The West-Indian interest, which opposed them, was a collected body, of great power, affluence, connexions, and respectability.

Artifice had also been employed. Abolition and emancipation, had been so often confounded, and by those who knew better, that it must have been purposely done, to

throw an odium on the measure which was now before them.

An honourable member, colonel Tarleton, had disclaimed every attempt to interest the feelings of those present, but had desired to call them to reason and accounts. He also desired, though it was a question of feeling, if any one ever was, to draw the attention of the committee to reason and accounts; to the voice of reason, instead of that of prejudice; and to accounts, in the place of idle apprehensions. The result, he doubted not, would be a full persuasion, that policy and justice were inseparable upon this, as upon every other occasion.

The same gentleman had enlarged on the injustice of depriving the Liverpool merchants of a business, on which were founded their honour and their fortunes. On what part of it they founded their honour, he could not conjecture, except from those passages in the evidence, where it appeared, that their agents in Africa, had systematically practised every fraud and villainy, which the meanest and most unprincipled cunning could suggest, to impose on the ignorance of those with whom they traded.

The same gentleman had also dwelt upon the Slave-trade, as a nursery for seamen. But it had appeared by the muster-rolls of the slave-vessels, then actually on the table of the house, that more than a fifth of them died in the service, exclusive of those who perished when discharged in the West-Indies; and yet he had been instructed by his constituents to maintain this false position.

That civilization of the Africans was promoted, as had been asserted, by their intercourse with the Europeans, was void of foundation, as had appeared from the evidence. In manners and dishonesty, they had indeed assimilated with those who frequented their coasts. But the greatest

industry, and the least corruption of morals, were in the interior, where they were out of the way of this civilizing connexion.

That the slaves were exposed to great misery in the islands, was true, as well from inference as from facts : for that might not be expected from the use of arbitrary power, where the three characters of party, judge, and executioner were united ! The slaves too, were more capable on account of their passions, than the beasts of the field, of exciting the passions of their tyrants. To what a length the ill treatment of them might be carried, might be learnt from the instance which general Tottenham mentioned to have seen in the year 1780, in the streets of Bridge-Town, Barbadoes : “ A youth about nineteen, to use his own words in the evidence, entirely naked, with an iron collar about his neck, having five long projecting spikes. His body both before and behind, was covered with wounds. His belly and thighs were almost cut to pieces, with running ulcers all over them ; and a finger might have been hid in some of the weals. He could not sit down, because his hinder part was mortified ; and it was impossible for him to lie down, on account of the prongs of his collar.” He supplicated the general for relief. The latter asked, who had punished him so dreadfully ? The youth answered, his master had done it. And because he could not work, this same master, in the same spirit of perversion, which extorts from scripture a justification of the Slave-trade, had fulfilled the apostolic maxim, that he should have nothing to eat. The use he meant to make of this instance, was to show the unprotected state of the slaves. What must it be, where such an instance could pass not only unpunished, but almost unregarded ! If, in the streets of London, but a dog were to be seen lacerated like this

miserable man, how would the cruelty of the wretchederated, who had thus even abused a brute !

But he would say no more. He should vote for olition, not only as it would do away all the evils coed of in Africa and the middle passage ; but as it w the most effectual means of ameliorating the cond those unhappy persons, who were still to continue sl the British colonies.

Mr. Courtenay rose. He said, he could not but e the assertion of Sir William Yonge as a mistake, t Slave-trade, if abandoned by us, would fall into the of France. It ought to be recollected, with what bation the motion for abolishing it, made by the late beau, had been received ; although the situation French colonies might then have presented obstacle, rying the measure into immediate execution. He doubt, if parliament were to begin, so wise and enli a body as the national assembly would follow the e : But even, if France were not to relinquish the tra could we, if justice required its abolition, hesitate a part of it ?

The trade, it had been said, was conducted u principles of humanity. Yes : we rescued the A from what we were pleased to call their wretched s in their own country, and then we took credit for manity ; because, after having killed one half of the seasoning, we substituted what we were again to call a better treatment, than that which they have experienced at home.

Lord Carysfort rose, and said, that the great c the abolition had flourished by the manner in whic been opposed. No one argument of solid weight h adduced against it.

Colonel Phipps followed lord Carysfort. He denied that this was a question in which the rights of humanity, and the laws of nature, were concerned. The Africans became slaves, in consequence of the constitution of their own governments. These were founded in absolute despotism. Every subject was an actual slave. The inhabitants were slaves to the great men ; and the great men were slaves to the Prince. Prisoners of war, too, were by law subject to slavery. Such being the case, he saw no more cruelty in disposing of them to our merchants, than to those of any other nation. Criminals, also in cases of adultery and witchcraft, became slaves by the same laws.

He was sorry to differ from his friend Mr. Wilberforce, but he must oppose his motion.

Mr. Pitt rose, and said, that from the first hour of his having had the honour to sit in parliament, down to the present, among all the questions, whether political or personal, in which it had been his fortune to take a share, there had never been one in which his heart was so deeply interested, as in the present ; both on account of the serious principles it involved, and the consequences connected with it.

The present was not a mere question of feeling. The argument, which ought in his opinion to determine the committee, was, that the Slave-trade was unjust. It was therefore such a trade as it was impossible for him to support, unless it could be first proved to him, that there were no laws of morality binding upon nations ; and that it was not the duty of a legislature, to restrain its subjects from invading the happiness of other countries, and from violating the fundamental principles of justice.

Several had stated the impracticability of the measure before them. They wished to see the trade abolished ;

but there was some necessity for continuing it, which they conceived to exist. Nay, almost every one, he believed, appeared to wish, that the further importation of slaves might cease, provided it could be made out, that the population of the West-Indies could be maintained without it. He proposed therefore, to consider the latter point; for, as the impracticability of keeping up the population, there, appeared to operate as the chief objection, he trusted that, by showing it to be ill founded, he should clear away all other obstacles whatever: so that, having no ground either of justice or necessity to stand upon, there could be no excuse left to the committee for resisting the present motion.

He could not help thinking, that the West-India gentlemen had manifested an over great degree of sensibility, as to the point in question; and that their alarms had been unreasonably excited upon it. He had examined the subject carefully for himself; and he would now detail those reasons, which had induced him firmly to believe, not only that no permanent mischief would follow from the abolition; but not even any such temporary inconvenience, as could be stated to be a reason for preventing the house from agreeing to the motion before them; on the contrary, that the abolition itself, would lay the foundation for the more solid improvement of all the various interests of those colonies.

In doing this, he should apply his observations chiefly to Jamaica, which contained more than half the slaves in the British West-Indies: and if he should succeed in proving, that no material detriment could arise to the population there, this would afford so strong a presumption with respect to the other islands, that the house could no longer

hesitate, whether they should, or should not, put a stop to this most horrid trade.

In the twenty years ending in 1788, the annual loss of slaves in Jamaica, that is, the excess of deaths above the births, appeared to be one in the hundred. In a preceding period, the loss was greater; and, in a period before that, greater still; there having been a continual gradation in the decrease through the whole time. It might fairly be concluded, therefore, that the average loss of the last period being one per cent. the loss in the former part of it, would be somewhat more, and in the latter part somewhat less, than one per cent inasmuch that it might be fairly questioned, whether by this time, the births and deaths in Jamaica, might not be stated as nearly equal. It was to be added, that a peculiar calamity, which swept away fifteen thousand slaves, had occasioned a part of the mortality in the last mentioned period. The probable loss, therefore, now to be expected, was very inconsiderable indeed.

There was, however, one circumstance to be added, which the West-India gentlemen, in stating this matter, had entirely overlooked; and which was so material, as clearly, to reduce the probable diminution in the population of Jamaica, down to nothing. In all the calculations he had referred to, of the comparative number of births and deaths, all the Negroes in the island were included. The newly imported, who died in the seasoning, made a part. But these swelled most materially, the number of the deaths. Now as these extraordinary deaths would cease, as soon as the importations ceased, a deduction of them ought to be made from his present calculation.

But the number of those, who thus died in the seasoning, would make up of itself nearly the whole of that one per cent. which had been stated. He particularly pressed an

attention to this circumstance; for the complaint of being likely to want hands in Jamaica, arose from the mistake of including the present unnatural deaths, caused by the seasoning, among the natural and perpetual causes of mortality. These deaths, being erroneously taken into the calculations, gave the planters an idea, that the numbers could not be kept up. These deaths, which were caused merely by the Slave-trade, furnished the very ground, therefore, on which the continuance of that trade had been thought necessary.

The evidence as to this point was clear; for it would be found in that dreadful catalogue of deaths, arising from the seasoning and the passage, which the house had been condemned to look into, that one half died. An annual mortality of two thousand slaves in Jamaica, might be therefore charged to the importation; which, compared with the whole number on the island, hardly fell short of the whole one per cent. decrease.

Joining this with all the other considerations, he would then ask, Could the decrease of the slaves in Jamaica be such; could the colonies be so destitute of means; could the planters, when, by their own accounts, they were establishing daily new regulations for the benefit of the slaves; could they, under all these circumstances, be permitted to plead that total impossibility of keeping up their number, which they had rested on, as being indeed the only possible pretext for allowing fresh importations from Africa? He appealed, therefore, to the sober judgment of all, whether the situation of Jamaica was such, as to justify a hesitation in agreeing to the present motion?

He had now proved, far more than he was bound to do; for, if he could only show that the abolition would not be ruinous, it would be enough. He could give up, therefore,

three arguments out of four, through the whole of what he had said, and yet have enough left for his position. As to the Creoles, they would undoubtedly increase. They differed in this entirely from the imported slaves, who were both a burthen and a curse to themselves and others. The measure now proposed would operate like a charm; and, besides stopping all the miseries in Africa, and the passage, would produce even more benefit in the West-Indies, than legal regulations could effect.

From Jamaica, he would now go to the other islands. In Barbadoes, the slaves had rather increased. In St. Kitts, the decrease for fourteen years, had been but three fourths per cent. But here many of the observations would apply, which he had used in the case of Jamaica. In Antigua, many had died by a particular calamity. But for this, the decrease would have been trifling. In Nevis and Montserrat, there was little or no disproportion of the sexes; so that it might well be hoped, that the numbers would be kept up in these islands. In Dominica, some controversy had arisen about the calculation; but governor Orde had stated an increase of births above the deaths. From Grenada and St. Vincents, no accurate accounts had been delivered in answer to the queries sent them; but they were probably not in circumstances less favourable than in the other islands.

On a full review, then, of the state of the Negro population in the West-Indies, was there any serious ground of alarm from the abolition of the Slave-trade? Where was the impracticability, on which alone so many had rested their objections? Must we not blush at pretending, that it would distress our consciences to accede to this measure, as far as the question of the Negro population was concerned?

Intolerable were the mischiefs of this trade, both in its origin, and through every stage of its progress. To say that slaves could be furnished us by fair and commercial means, was ridiculous. The trade sometimes ceased, as during the late war. The demand was more or less, according to circumstances. But how was it possible, that to a demand so exceedingly fluctuating, the supply should always exactly accommodate itself? Alas! we made human beings the subject of commerce; we talked of them as such; and yet we would not allow them the common principle of commerce, that the supply must accommodate itself to the consumption. It was not from wars, then, that the slaves were chiefly procured. They were obtained in proportion as they were wanted. If a demand for slaves arose, a supply was forced in one way or other; and it was in vain, overpowered as we then were with positive evidence, as well as the reasonableness of the supposition, to deny that by the Slave-trade we occasioned all the enormities which had been alleged against it.

Sir Archibald Edmonstone rose, and asked, whether the present motion went so far, as to pledge those who voted for it, to a total and immediate abolition.

Mr. Fox at length rose. He observed, that some expressions, which he had used on the preceding day, had been complained of as too harsh, and severe. He had since considered them; but he could not prevail upon himself to retract them; because, if any gentleman, after reading the evidence on the table, and attending to the debate, could avow himself an abettor of this shameful traffic in human flesh, it could only be either from some hardness of heart, or some difficulty of understanding, which he really knew not how to account for.

me had considered this question as a question of political freedom, whereas it was a question of personal freedom. Political freedom was undoubtedly a great blessing; but, if it came to be compared with personal, it sunk to nothing. To confound the two, served therefore to render arguments on either, perplexing and unintelligible. Personal freedom was the first right of every human being. It was a right, of which he who deprived a fellow-creature was absolutely criminal in so depriving him, and which if withheld, was no less criminal in withholding. He

did not therefore retract his words with respect to any, whatever respect he might otherwise have for them, but, by their vote of that night, deprive their fellow-creatures of so great a blessing. Nay, he would go further. He could say, that if the house, knowing what the trade was by the evidence, did not, by their vote, mark to all men their abhorrence of a practice so savage, so enormous, so repugnant to all laws human and divine, they might consign their character to eternal infamy.

But at the pretence of danger to our West India islands, the abolition of the Slave-trade, was totally unfounded. Mr. Wilberforce had abundantly proved: but if there were those, who had not been satisfied with that proof, was it possible to resist the arguments of Mr. Pitt, on the same subject? It had been shown, on a comparison of the births and deaths in Jamaica, that there was not now any decrease of slaves. But if there had been, it would have made no reference to him in his vote; for, had the mortality been so great there, he should have ascribed it to the system of importing Negroes, instead of that of encouraging natural increase. Was it not evident, that the planters thought it more convenient to buy them fit for work, than to breed them? Why, then, was this horrid trade to

be kept up? To give the planters, truly, the liberty of misusing their slaves, so as to check population; for it was from ill usage only that, in a climate so natural to them, their numbers could diminish. The very ground, therefore, on which the planters rested the necessity of fresh importations, namely, the destruction of lives in the West Indies, was itself the strongest argument that could be given, and furnished the most imperious call upon parliament for the abolition of the trade.

Against this trade, innumerable were the charges. It was not denied, that absolute power was exercised by the slave-captains; and if this was granted, all the cruelties charged upon them would naturally follow. Never did he hear of charges so black and horrible, as those contained in the evidence on the table. They unfolded such a scene of cruelty, that if the house, with all their present knowledge of the circumstances, should dare to vote for its continuance, they must have nerves, of which he had no conception. To continue a trade which was a wholesale sacrifice of a whole order and race of our fellow creatures; which carried them away by force from their native country, in order to subject them to the mere will and caprice, the tyranny and oppression, of other human beings, for their whole natural lives, them and their posterity for ever!! O most monstrous wickedness! O unparalleled barbarity! And, what was more aggravating, this most complicated scene of robbery and murder which mankind had ever witnessed, had been honoured by the name of—trade.

That a number of human beings, should be at all times ready to be furnished as fair articles of commerce, just as our occasions might require, was absurd. The argument of Mr. Pitt, on this head, was unanswerable. Our demand, was fluctuating: it entirely ceased at some times: at other

it was great and pressing. How was it possible, on every sudden call, to furnish a sufficient return in slaves, without resorting to those execrable means of obtaining them, which were stated in the evidence ? These were of three sorts, and he would now examine them.

Captives in war, it was urged, were consigned either to death or slavery. This, however, he believed to be false in point of fact. It was the practice of the slave-merchants, to try to intoxicate the African kings, in order to turn them to their purpose. A particular instance occurred in the evidence, of a prince, who, when sober, resisted their wishes ; but in the moment of inebriety, he gave the word for war, attacked the next village, and sold the inhabitants to the merchants.

The second mode was kidnapping. He referred the house to various instances of this in the evidence.

The third mode of obtaining slaves, was by crimes committed or imputed. One of these was adultery. But was Africa the place, where Englishmen, above all others, were to go to find out and punish adulterers ? Did it become us to cast the first stone ? It was a most extraordinary pilgrimage, for a most extraordinary purpose ! And yet upon this plea, we justified our right of carrying off its inhabitants. The offence alleged next, was witchcraft. What a reproach it was to lend ourselves to this superstition ! Yes : we stood by ; we heard the trial ; we knew the crime to be impossible ; and that the accused must be innocent : but we waited in patient silence for his condemnation ; and then we lent our friendly aid to the police of the country, by buying the wretched convict, with all his family, whom, for the benefit of Africa, we carried away also into perpetual slavery.

It had been said, in justification of the trade, that the Africans were less happy at home than in the islands. But what right had we to be judges of their condition? They would tell us a very different tale, if they were asked. But it was ridiculous to say, that we bettered their condition, when we dragged them from every thing dear in life, to the most abject state of slavery.

It had been said that England ought not to abolish the Slave-trade, unless other nations would also give it up. But what kind of morality was this? The trade was defensible upon no other principle than that of a highwayman. Great Britain could not keep it upon these terms. Mere gain was not a motive for a great country to rest on, as a justification of any measure. Honour was its superior; and justice was superior to honour.

With respect to the intellect and sensibility of the Africans, it was pride only, which suggested a difference between them and ourselves. There was a remarkable instance to the point, in the evidence, and which he would quote. In one of the slave-ships, was a person of consequence; a man, once high in a military station, and with a mind not insensible to the eminence of his rank. He had been taken captive and sold; and was then in the hold, confined promiscuously with the rest. Happening in the night to fall asleep, he dreamed that he was in his own country; high in honour and command; caressed by his family and friends; waited on by his domestics, and surrounded with all his former comforts in life. But awaking suddenly, and finding where he was, he was heard to burst into the loudest groans and lamentations, on the miserable contrast of his present state; mixed with the meanest of his subjects; and subjected to the insolence of wretches a thousand times lower than himself in every kind of endow-

ment. He appealed to the house, whether this was not as moving a picture of the miserable effects of the Slave-trade, as could be well imagined. There was one way, by which they might judge of it. Let them make the case their own. This was the Christian rule of judging; and, having mentioned Christianity, he was sorry to find that any should suppose, that it had given countenance to such a system of oppression. So far was this from being the case, that he thought it one of the most splendid triumphs of this religion, that it had caused slavery to be so generally abolished on its appearance in the world. It had done this by teaching us, among other beautiful precepts, that, in the sight of their Maker, all mankind were equal. Its influence appeared to have been more powerful in this respect, than that of all the ancient systems of philosophy; though even in these, in point of theory, we might trace great liberality and consideration for human rights.

He would now conclude, by declaring, that the whole country, indeed the whole civilized world, must rejoice that such a bill as the present had been moved for, not merely as a matter of humanity, but as an act of justice; for he would put humanity out of the case. Could it be called humanity, to forbear from committing murder? Exactly upon this ground, did the present motion stand; being strictly a question of national justice. He thanked Mr. Wilberforce, for having pledged himself so strongly to pursue his object, till it was accomplished; and, as for himself, he declared, that, in whatever situation he might ever be, he would use his warmest efforts for the promotion of this righteous cause.

Mr. Stanley, the member for Lancashire, rose, and declared that, when he came into the house, he intended to vote against the abolition; but that the impression made,

both on his feelings and on his understanding, was such, that he could not persist in his resolution. He was now convinced, that the entire abolition of the Slave-trade, was called for equally by sound policy and justice. He thought it right and fair to avow manfully this change in his opinion. The abolition, he was sure, could not long fail of being carried. The arguments for it were irresistible.

The honourable Mr. Ryder said, that he came to the house, not exactly in the same circumstances as Mr. Stanley, but very undecided on the subject. He was, however, so strongly convinced by the arguments he had heard, that he was become equally earnest for the abolition.

Mr. Smith, member for Pontefract, said, that he should not trouble the house at so late an hour, further than to enter his protest, in the most solemn manner, against this trade, which he considered as most disgraceful to the country, and contrary to all the principles of justice and religion.

Mr. Sumner declared himself against the total, immediate, and unqualified abolition, which he thought would wound at least the prejudices of the West-Indians, and might do mischief; but a gradual abolition should have his hearty support.

Major Scott declared there was no member in the house, who would give a more independent vote upon this question, than himself. He had no concern either in the African or West Indian trades; but in the present state of the finances of the country, he thought it would be a dangerous experiment to risk any one branch of our foreign commerce. As far as regulation would go, he would join in the measure.

Mr. Burke said he would use but few words. He declared that he had for a long time had his mind drawn towards this great subject. He had even prepared a bill for

the regulation of the trade, conceiving at that time, that the immediate abolition of it was a thing hardly to be hoped for; but when he found that Mr. Wilberforce had seriously undertaken the work, and that his motion was for the abolition, which he approved much more than his own, he had burnt his papers, and made an offering of them, in honour of his nobler proposition, much in the same manner as we read, that the curious books were offered up and burnt at the approach of the Gospel. He highly applauded the confessions of Mr. Stanley and Mr. Ryder. It would be a glorious tale for them to tell their constituents, that it was impossible for them, however prejudiced, if sent to hear discussion in that house, to avoid surrendering up their hearts and judgments, at the shrine of reason.

Mr. Drake said, that he would oppose the abolition to the utmost. We had, by a want of prudent conduct, lost America. The house should be aware of being carried away by the meteors with which they had been dazzled. The leaders, it was true, were for the abolition; but the minor orators, the dwarfs, the pigmies, he trusted, would that night carry the question against them. The property of the West Indians was at stake; and, though men might be generous with their own property, they should not be so with the property of others.

Mr. Wilberforce made a short reply to some arguments in the course of the debate; after which, at half past three in the morning, the house divided. There appeared for Mr. Wilberforce's motion, eighty-eight, and against it, one hundred and sixty-three; so that it was lost by a majority of seventy-five votes.

By this unfavourable division, the great contest in which we had been so long engaged, was decided. We were obliged to give way to superior numbers. Our fall, however,

grievous as it was, was rendered more tolerable, by the circumstance of having been prepared to expect it. It was rendered more tolerable also, by other considerations ; for we had the pleasure of knowing, that we had several of the most distinguished characters in the kingdom, and almost all the splendid talents of the house of commons, in our favour. We knew too, that the question had not been carried against us, either by evidence or by argument ; but that we were the victims of the accidents and circumstances of the times. And as these considerations comforted us, when we looked forward to future operations on this great question, so we found great consolation as to the past, in believing, that, unless human constitutions were stronger than they really were, we could not have done more than we had done towards the furtherance of the cause.

The committee for the abolition, held a meeting soon after this our defeat. It was the most impressive I ever attended. The looks of all bespoke the feelings of their hearts. Little was said previously to the opening of the business ; and, after it was opened, it was conducted with a kind of solemn dignity, which became the occasion. The committee, in the course of its deliberations, came to the following resolutions :

That the thanks of this committee, be respectfully given to the illustrious minority of the house of commons, who lately stood forth the asserters of British justice and humanity, and the enemies of a traffic in the blood of man.

That our acknowledgements are particularly due to William Wilberforce, esquire, for his unwearied exertions to remove this opprobrium of our national character ; and to the right honourable William Pitt, and the right honourable Charles James Fox, for their virtuous and dignified co-operation in the same cause.

That the solemn declarations of these gentlemen, and of Matthew Montagu and William Smith, esquires, that they will not relinquish, but with life, their struggle for the abolition of the Slave-trade, are not only highly honourable to themselves as Britons, as Statesmen, and as Christians, but must eventually, as the light of evidence shall be more and more diffused, be seconded by the good wishes of every man, not immediately interested in the continuance of that detestable commerce.

And, lastly, that anticipating the opposition they should have to sustain from persons trained to a familiarity with the rapine and desolation necessarily attendant on the Slave-trade, and sensible also of the prejudices which implicitly arise from long-established usages, this committee consider the late decision in the house of commons, as a delay, rather than a defeat. In addressing a free and enlightened nation on a subject, in which its justice, its humanity, and its wisdom are involved, they cannot despair of final success; and they do hereby, under an increasing conviction of the excellence of their cause, and in conformity to the distinguished examples before them, renew their firm protestation, that they will never desist from appealing to their countrymen, till the commercial intercourse with Africa shall cease to be polluted with the blood of its inhabitants.

These resolutions were published, and they were followed by a suitable report.

The several committees established in the country, on receiving the resolutions and report as before mentioned, testified their sympathy, in letters of condolence to that of London, on the late melancholy occasion; and expressed their determination to support it as long as any vestiges of this barbarous traffic should remain.

At length the session ended ; and though, in the course of it, the afflicting loss of the general question had occurred, there was yet an attempt made by the abolitionists in parliament, which met with a better fate. The Sierra Leone company received the sanction of the legislature. The object of this institution, was to colonize a small portion of the coast of Africa. They, who were to settle there, were to have no concern in the Slave-trade, but to discourage it as much as possible. They were to endeavour to establish a new species of commerce, and to promote cultivation in its neighbourhood, by free labour. The persons more generally fixed upon for colonists, were such Negroes, with their wives and families, as chose to abandon their habitations in Nova-Scotia. These had followed the British arms in America ; and had been settled there, as a reward for their services, by the British government. My brother, lately chosen a member of the committee, and who had essentially served the great cause of the abolition on many occasions, undertook a visit to Nova-Scotia, to see if those in question were willing to undergo the change ; and in that case to provide transports, and conduct them to Sierra Leone. This object he accomplished. He embarked more than eleven hundred persons in fifteen vessels, all of which he took the command. On landing them, he became the first Governor of the new Colony. Having laid the foundation of it, he returned to England ; when a successor was appointed. From that time many unexpected circumstances, but particularly devastations by the French, in the beginning of the war, took place, which contributed to ruin the trading company, which was attached to it. It is pleasing, however, to reflect, that though the object of the institution, as far as mercantile profit was concerned, thus failed, the other objects belonging to it, were promoted.

Schools, places of worship, agriculture, and the habits of civilized life, were established. Sierra Leone, therefore, now presents itself as the medium of civilization for Africa.

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## CHAPTER V.

*Various and successive motions in the house of Commons relative to the African slave trade ; until its final abolition in 1807.*

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### SECTION I.

THE defeat which we had just sustained, was a matter of great triumph to our opponents. When they captured the majority in the house of commons in their favour, they viewed the resolutions of the committee, which had been detailed, as the last spiteful effort of a vanquished and dying animal, and they supposed that they had condemned the question to eternal sleep. The committee, however, were too deeply attached to the cause, vanquished as they were, to desert it ; and they knew also too well the barometer of public feeling, and the occasion of its fluctuations, to despair. In the year 1787, the members of the house of commons, as well as the people, were enthusiastic in behalf of the abolition of the trade. In the year 1788, the fair enthusiasm of the former began to fade. In 1789, it died. In 1790, prejudice started up as a noxious weed in its place. In 1791 this prejudice arrived at its growth

But to what were these changes owing? To delay; during which the mind, having been gradually led to the question, as a commercial, had been gradually taken from it, as a moral object. But it was possible to restore the mind to its proper place. Add to which, that the nation had never deserted the cause during this whole period.

It is much to the honour of the English people, that they should have continued to feel for the existence of an evil which was so far removed from their sight. But at this moment their feelings began to be insupportable. Many of them resolved, as soon as parliament had rejected the bill, to abstain from the use of West-Indian produce. In this state of things, a pamphlet, written by William Bell Crafton, of Tewkesbury, and called "A Sketch of the Evidence, with a Recommendation on the Subject, to the serious Attention of People in general," made its appearance; and another followed it, written by William Fox, of London, "On the Propriety of abstaining from West-India Sugar and Rum." These pamphlets took the same ground. They inculcated abstinence from these articles as a moral duty; they inculcated it, as a peaceable and constitutional measure; and they laid before the reader a truth, which was sufficiently obvious, that if each would abstain, the people would have a complete remedy for this enormous evil in their own power.

While these things were going on, it devolved upon me, to arrange all the evidence on the part of the abolition, under proper heads, and to abridge it into one volume. It was intended that a copy of this should be sent into different towns of the kingdom, that all might know, if possible, the horrors, as far as the evidence contained them, of this execrable trade; and as it was possible that these copies might lie in the places where they were sent, without a due attention to their contents, I resolved, with the approbation

of the committee, to take a journey, and for no other purpose than personally to recommend that they might be read.

The books, having been printed, they were dispatched before me. Of this tour, I shall give the reader no other account, than that of the progress of the remedy, which the people were then taking into their own hands. And first I may observe, that there was no town, through which I passed, in which there was not some one individual who had left off the use of sugar. In the smaller towns, there were from ten to fifty by estimation, and in the larger, from two to five hundred, who had made this sacrifice to virtue. These were of all ranks and parties. Rich and poor, churchmen and dissenters, had adopted the measure. Even grocers had left off trading in the article, in some places. In gentlemen's families, where the master had set the example, the servants had often voluntarily followed it; and even children, who were capable of understanding the history of the sufferings of the Africans, excluded, with the most virtuous resolution, the sweets, to which they had been accustomed, from their lips. By the best computation I was able to make, from notes taken down in my journey, no fewer than three hundred thousand persons had abandoned the use of sugar.

Having travelled over Wales, and two thirds of England, I found it would be impossible to visit Scotland, on the same errand. I had already, by moving upwards and downwards in parallel lines, and by intersecting these in the same manner, passed over six thousand miles. By the best calculation I could make, I had yet two thousand to perform. By means of almost incessant journeyings, night and day, I had suffered much in my health. My strength was failing daily. I wrote therefore to the committee on

this subject ; and they communicated immediately with Dr. Dickson, who, on being applied to, visited Scotland in my stead. He consulted first with the committee at Edinburgh, relative to the circulation of the Abridgement of the Evidence. He then pursued his journey, and in conjunction with the unwearied efforts of Mr. Campbell Hali-burton, rendered essential service to the cause, for this part of the kingdom.

The effects of the two journeys by Dr. Dickson and myself, were soon visible. The people could not bear the facts, which had been disclosed to them, by the Abridgement of the Evidence. They were not satisfied, many of them, with the mere abstinence from sugar ; but began to form committees to correspond with that of London. The first of these appeared at Newcastle upon Tyne, so early as the month of October. The second was established at Nottingham. Other committees started up in their turn. At length public meetings began to take place, and after this, petitions to be sent to parliament ; and these so generally, that there was not a day for three months, Sundays excepted, in which five or six were not resolved upon, in some places or other in the kingdom.

Of the enthusiasm of the nation at this time, none can form an opinion but they who witnessed it. There never was perhaps a season when so much virtuous feeling pervaded all ranks. Great pains were taken by interested persons, in many places, to prevent public meetings. But no efforts could avail. The current ran with such strength and rapidity, that it was impossible to stem it.

And as no petitions were ever more respectable than those presented on this occasion, as far as they breathed the voice of the people, and as far as they were founded on a knowledge of the object which they solicited, so none

were ever more numerous, as far as we have any record of such transactions. Not fewer than three hundred and ten were presented from England; one hundred and eighty-seven from Scotland; and twenty from Wales. Two other petitions also for the abolition came from England, but they were too late for delivery. On the other side of the question, one was presented from the town of Reading, for regulation, in opposition to that for abolition from the same place. There were also four against abolition. The first of these was from certain persons at Derby, in opposition to the other from that town. The second was from Stephen Fuller, esquire, as agent for Jamaica. The third from J. Dawson, esquire, a slave-merchant at Liverpool. And the fourth from the merchants, planters, mortgagees, annuitants, and others concerned in the West-Indian colonies. Taking in all these statements, the account stood thus: For regulation there was one; against all abolition there were four; and for the total abolition of the trade, five hundred and nineteen.

On the second of April, 1792, Mr. Wilberforce moved the order of the day; which having been agreed to, Sir William Dolben was put into the chair.

He then began by soliciting the candid attention of the West-Indians to what he was going to deliver to the house. However others might have censured them, indiscriminately, he had always himself made a distinction between them and their system. It was the latter only, which he reprobated. If aristocracy had been thought a worse form of government than monarchy, because the people had many tyrants instead of one, how objectionable must be that form of it, which existed in our colonies! Arbitrary power could be bought there by any one, who could buy a slave. The fierceness of it was doubtless restrained by an eleva-

tion of mind in many, as arising from a consciousness of superior rank and consequence : but, alas ! it was too often exercised there by the base and vulgar. The more liberal too of the planters, were not resident upon their estates. Hence a promiscuous censure of them would be unjust, though their system would undoubtedly be odious.

He then took a copious view of the advantages, which would arise both to the master and to the slave, if this traffic were done away ; and having recapitulated and answered the different objections to such a measure, he went to that part of the subject, in which he described himself to be most interested.

He had shown, he said, last year, that Africa was exposed to all the horrors of war ; and that most of these wars had their origin in the Slave-trade.

He had shown again, that many acts of violence were perpetrated by the Europeans themselves. But he would now relate others, which had happened since. The captain of an English vessel, lying in the river Cameroons, sent his boat with three sailors and a slave to get water. A black trader seized the latter, and took him away. He alleged in his defence, that the captain owed him goods to a greater amount than the value of the slave ; and that he would not pay him.

This being told on board, the captain, and a part of his crew, who were compelled to blacken their naked bodies that they might appear like the natives, went on shore at midnight, armed with muskets and cutlasses. They fired on the trader's dwelling, and killed three of his children on the spot. The trader, being badly wounded, died while they were dragging him to the boat, and his wife being wounded also, died in half an hour after she was on board of the ship. Resistance having been made to these violent

edings, some of the sailors were wounded, and one killed. Some weeks after this affray, a chieftain of name of Quarmo, went on board the same vessel, to borrow some cutlasses and muskets. He was going, he said, into the country to make war ; and the captain should give him half of his booty. So well understood were the practices of the trade, that his request was granted. Quarmo, however, and his associates, finding things favourable to their design, suddenly seized the captain, threw him overboard, hauled him into their canoe, and dragged him to the shore ; where another party of the natives, lying in ambush, seized such of the crew as were absent from the ship. But how did these savages behave, when they had these different persons in their power ? Did they not instantly retaliate by murdering them all ? No : they only obliged the captain to give an order on the vessel to pay his debts. This happened only two months ago, in a trial in the court of common pleas, not in a trial for piracy and murder : but in the trial of a civil suit, instituted by some of the poor natives, to whom the owners refused their wages, because the natives, on account of the villainous conduct of their captain, had kept them from their vessel, by detaining them as prisoners on shore. This instance, he said, proved the dreadful nature of the Slave-trade, its cruelty, its dishonesty, and its effect on the Africans as well as on the Europeans, who carried it on. The cool manner, in which this transaction was conducted on both sides, showed that such practices were not novel. It showed also the manner of doing business in the trade. It must be remembered that these transactions were carrying on at the very time when the inquiry concerning this trade was going forward in Parliament, and whilst the witnesses of his oppo-

nents were strenuously denying not only the actual, but the possible, existence of any such depredations.

He would now say a few words relative to the Middle Passage, principally to show, that regulation could not effect a cure of the evil there. Mr. Isaac Wilson had stated in his evidence, that the ship, in which he sailed, only three years ago, was of three hundred and seventy tons; and that she carried six hundred and two slaves. Of these she lost one hundred and fifty-five. There were three or four other vessels in company with her, and which belonged to the same owners. One of these carried four hundred and fifty, and lost two hundred; another carried four hundred and sixty-six, and lost seventy-three; another five hundred and forty-six, and lost one hundred and fifty-eight; and from the four together, after the landing of their cargoes, two hundred and twenty died. He fell in with another vessel, which had lost three hundred and sixty-two; but the number, which had been bought, was not specified. Now, if to these actual deaths, during and immediately after the voyage, we were to add the subsequent loss in the seasoning, and to consider that this would be greater than ordinary, in cargoes which were landed in such a sickly state, we should find a mortality, which if it were only general for a few months, would entirely depopulate the globe.

But he would advert to what Mr. Wilson said, when examined, as a surgeon, as to the causes of these losses, and particularly on board his own ship, where he had the means of ascertaining them. The substance of his reply was this: That most of the slaves laboured under a fixed melancholy, which now and then broke out into lamentations and plaintive songs, expressive of the loss of their relations, friends, and country. So powerfully did this sorrow oper-

ate, that many of them attempted, in various ways, to destroy themselves, and three actually effected it. Others obstinately refused to take sustenance; and when the whip, and other violent means, were used to compel them to eat, they looked up in the face of the officer, who unwillingly executed this painful task, and said with a smile, in their own language, "Presently we shall be no more." This, their unhappy state of mind, produced a general languor and debility, which were increased in many instances by an unconquerable aversion to food, arising partly from sickness, and partly, to use the language of the slave-captains, from sulkiness. These causes naturally produced the flux. The contagion spread; several were carried off daily; and the disorder, aided by so many powerful auxiliaries, resisted the power of medicine. And it was worth while to remark, that these grievous sufferings were not owing either to want of care on the part of the owners, or to any negligence or harshness of the captain; for Mr. Wilson declared, that his ship was as well fitted out, and the crew and slaves as well treated, as any body could reasonably expect.

Even in the last year, the deaths on shipboard would be found to have been between ten and eleven per cent. on the whole number exported. In truth, the house could not reach the cause of this mortality, by all their regulations. Until they could cure a broken heart, until they could legislate for the affections, and bind by their statutes, the passions and feelings of the mind, their labour would be in vain.

Such were the evils of the passage. But evils were conspicuous every where, in this trade. Never was there, indeed, a system so replete with wickedness and cruelty. To whatever part of it we turned our eyes, whether to Af-

rica, the Middle passage, or the West-Indies, we could find no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It was the gracious ordinance of Providence, both in the natural and moral world, that good should often arise out of evil. Hurricanes cleared the air: and the propagation of truth, was promoted by persecution. Pride, vanity, and profusion contributed often, in their remoter consequences, to the happiness of mankind. In common, what was in itself evil and vicious, was permitted to carry along with it some circumstances of palliation. The Arab, was hospitable; the robber, brave. We did not necessarily find cruelty associated with fraud, or meanness with injustice. But here the case was far otherwise. It was the prerogative of this detested traffic, to separate from evil its concomitant good, and to reconcile discordant mischiefs. It robbed war of its generosity; it deprived peace of its security: we saw in it the vices of polished society, without its knowledge or its comforts; and the evils of barbarism, without its simplicity. No age, no sex, no rank, no condition was exempt from the fatal influence of this wide-wasting calamity. Thus it attained to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and, scorning all competition and comparison, it stood without a rival in the secure, undisputed, possession of its detestable pre-eminence.\*

He would only now observe, that his conviction of the indispensable necessity of immediately abolishing this trade, remained as strong as ever. Let those who talked

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\* He then cited various authorities, to prove, that wars were fomented in Africa, by the white traders, for the purpose of obtaining slaves.

of allowing three or four years to the continuance of it, reflect on the disgraceful scenes which had passed last year. As for himself, he would wash his hands of the blood which would be spilled in this horrid interval. He could not, however, but believe, that the hour was come, when we should put a final period to the existence of this cruel traffic. Should he unhappily be mistaken, he would never desert the cause; but to the last moment of his life, he would exert his utmost powers in its support. He would now move, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that the trade carried on by British subjects, for the purpose of obtaining slaves on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished."

Mr. Bailie was in hopes that the friends of the abolition, would have been contented with the innocent blood which had been already shed. The great island of St. Domingo, had been torn to pieces by insurrections. The most dreadful barbarities had been perpetrated there. In the year 1789, the imports into it exceeded five millions sterling. The exports from it in the same year, amounted to six millions; and the trade employed three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and thirty thousand seamen. This fine island, thus advantageously situated, had been lost in consequence of the agitation of the question of the Slave trade. Surely, so much mischief ought to have satisfied those who supported it; but they required the total destruction of all the West-Indian colonies, belonging to Great-Britain, to complete the ruin.

Before the agitation of this impolitic question, the slaves were contented with their situation. There was a mutual confidence between them and their masters: and this continued to be the case, till the new doctrines were broached.

But now depots of arms were necessary on every estate; and the scene was totally reversed.

He would now speak of the African and West, Indian trades. The imports and exports of these amounted to upwards of ten millions annually; and they gave employment to three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and to about twenty-five thousand seamen. These trades had been sanctioned by our ancestors in parliament. The laws for this purpose were enacted in reigns distinguished for the production of great and enlightened characters. We heard then of no wild and destructive doctrines like the present. These were reserved for this age of novelty and innovation. But he must remind the house, that the inhabitants of our islands, had as good a right to the protection of their property, as the inhabitants of Great-Britain. Nor could it be diminished in any shape, without full compensation.

Mr. Vaughan stated that, being a West-Indian by birth, and connected with the islands, he could speak from his own knowledge. In the early part of his life, he was strongly in favour of the abolition of the Slave-trade. He had been educated by Dr Priestly, and the father of Mrs. Barbauld; who were both of them friends to that question. Their sentiments he had imbibed: but, although bred at the feet of Gamaliel, he resolved to judge for himself, and he left England for Jamaica.

He found the situation of the slaves much better than he had imagined. Setting aside liberty, they were as well off as the poor in Europe. They had little want of clothes or fuel: they had a house and garden found them; were never imprisoned for debts; nor deterred from marrying through fear of being unable to support a family; their orphans and widows were taken care of, as they themselves were,

when old and disabled ; they had medical attendance without expense ; they had private property, which no master ever took from them ; and they were resigned to their situation, and looked for nothing beyond it.

But, notwithstanding what he had said, he allowed that there was room for improvement ; and particularly for instilling into the slaves the principles of religion. Where this should be realized, there would be less punishment, more work, more marriages, more issue, and more attachment to masters.

Mr. Henry Thornton conceived, that the two last speakers had not spoken to the point. The first had described the happy state of the slaves in the West-Indies. The latter had made similar representations ; but yet had allowed, that much improvement might be made in their condition. But this had nothing to do with the question then before them. The manner of procuring slaves in Africa was the great evil to be remedied. Africa was to be stripped of its inhabitants to supply a population for the West-Indies.

Though this evil had been fully proved, he could not avoid stating to the house some new facts, which had come to his knowledge, as a director of the Sierra Leone company : and which would still further establish it. The consideration, that they had taken place since the discussion of the last year on this subject, obliged him to relate them.

Mr. Falconbridge, agent to the company, sitting one evening in Sierra Leone, heard a shout, and immediately afterwards the report of a gun. Fearing an attack, he armed forty of the settlers, and rushed with them to the place from whence the noise came. He found a poor wretch who had been crossing from a neighbouring village, in the possession of a party of kidnappers, who were tying his

hands. Mr. Falconbridge, however, dared not rescue him, lest, in the defenceless state of his own town, retaliation might be made upon him.

At another time a young woman, living half a mile off, was sold, without any criminal charge, to one of the Slave-ships. She was well acquainted with the agent's wife, and had been with her only the day before. Her cries were heard; but it was impossible to relieve her.

At another time, a young lad, one of the free settlers who went from England, was caught by a neighbouring chief, as he was straggling alone from home, and sold for a slave. The pretext was, that some one in the town of Sierra Leone had committed an offence. Hence the first person belonging to it, who could be seized, was to be punished. Happily the free settlers saw him in his chains; and they recovered him, before he was conveyed to the ship.

Such was the nature of the Slave-trade. It had unfortunately obtained the name of a trade; and many had been deceived by the appellation. But it was war, and not trade. It was a mass of crimes, and not commerce. It was that which prevented the introduction of a trade in Africa.

He would say a few words relative to the numerous petitions, which were then on the table of the house. They had shown in an extraordinary manner, the opinion of the people. He did not wish to turn this into a constitutional question: but he would observe, that it was of the utmost consequence to the maintenance of the constitution of this country, that the reputation of parliament should be maintained. But nothing could prejudice its character so much as a vote, which should lead the people to believe, that the legislative body was the more corrupt part of it, and that it was slow to adopt moral principles.

Colonel Tarleton repeated his arguments of the last year. In addition to these, he inveighed bitterly against the abolitionists, as a junto of sectaries, sophists, enthusiasts, and fanatics. He condemned the abolition as useless, unless other nations would take it up. He ridiculed the petitions on the table. Itinerant clergymen, mendicant physicians, and others, had extorted signatures from the sick, the indigent, and the traveller. School-boys were invited to sign them, under the promise of a holiday. He had letters to produce, which would prove all these things, though he was not authorized to give up the names of those who had written them.

Mr. Montagu said, that, in the last session, he had simply entered his protest against the trade; but now he could be no longer silent; and as there were many, who had conceived regulation to be more desirable than abolition, he would confine himself to that subject.

Regulation, as it related to the manner of procuring slaves, was utterly impossible: for how could we know the case of each individual, whom we forced away into bondage? Could we establish tribunals all along the coast, and in every ship, to find it out? What judges could we get for such an office? But, if this could not be done upon the coast, how could we ascertain the justness of the captivity of by far the greatest number, who were brought from immense distances inland?

He called upon the planters to concur with his honourable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, in this great measure. He wished them to consider the progress, which the opinion of the injustice of this trade was making in the nation at large, as manifested by the petitions; which had almost obstructed the proceedings of the House, by their perpetual introduction. It was impossible for them to stifle this great

question. As for himself, he would renew his profession of last year, that he would never cease, but with life, to promote so glorious an end.

Mr. Whitbread said, that even if he could conceive, that the trade was, as some had asserted it to be, founded on principles of humanity; that the Africans were rescued from death in their own country; that, upon being carried to the West Indies, they were put under kind masters; that their labour there was easy; that at evening they returned cheerful to their homes; that in sickness they were attended with care; and that their old age was rendered comfortable; even then he would vote for the abolition of the Slave-trade; inasmuch as he was convinced, that that, which was fundamentally wrong, no practice could justify.

No eloquence could persuade him, that the Africans were torn from their country and their dearest connexions, merely that they might lead a happier life; or that they could be placed under the uncontrolled dominion of others, without suffering. Arbitrary power would spoil the hearts of the best. Hence would arise tyranny on the one side, and a sense of injury on the other. Hence the passions would be let loose, and a state of perpetual enmity would follow.

Colonel Tarleton had insinuated, that the petitions on the table had been obtained in an objectionable manner. He had the honour to present one from his constituents; which he would venture to say had originated with themselves; and that there did not exist more respectable names in the kingdom, than those of the persons who had signed it.

It had been said by another, Mr. Bailie, that the horrible insurrections in St. Domingo, arose from the discussion of the question of the Slave-trade. He denied the assertion; and maintained that they were the effect of the trade

itself. There was a point of endurance, beyond which human nature could not go ; at which the mind of man rose, by its native elasticity, with a spring and violence proportioned to the degree to which it had been depressed. The calamities in St. Domingo, proceeded from the Slave-trade alone ; and, if it were continued, similar evils were to be apprehended in our own islands. The cruelties, which the slaves had perpetrated in that unfortunate colony, they had learnt from their masters. Had not an African eyes ? Had he not ears ? Had he not organs, senses, and passions ? If you pricked him, would he not feel the puncture and bleed ? If you poisoned him, would he not die ? and, if you wronged him, would he not revenge ? But he had said sufficient ; for he feared he could not better the instruction.

Mr. Milbank would only just observe, that the policy of the measure of the abolition, was as great, as its justice was undeniable. Where slavery existed, every thing was out of its natural place. All improvement was at an end. There must also, from the nature of the human heart, be oppression. He warned the planters against the danger of fresh importations, and invited their concurrence in the measure.

Mr. Dundas, now Lord Melville, declared, that he had always been a warm friend to the abolition of the Slave-trade, though he differed from Mr. Wilberforce, as to the mode of effecting it.

The abolitionists, and those on the opposite side of the question, had, both of them, gone into extremes. The former were for the immediate and abrupt annihilation of the trade. The latter considered it as essentially necessary to the existence of the West Indian islands, and therefore laid it down, that it was to be continued for ever. Such was the

vaast distance between the parties. He would now address himself to each.

He would say first, that he agreed with his honourable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, in very material points. He believed the trade was not founded in policy; that the continuation of it was not essential to the preservation of our trade with the West Indian islands; and that the slaves were not only to be maintained, but increased there, by natural population. He agreed, too, as to the propriety of the abolition. But when his honourable friend talked of direct and abrupt abolition, he would submit it to him, whether he did not run counter to the prejudices of those who were most deeply interested in the question; and whether, if he could obtain his object, without wounding these, it would not be better to do it? Did he not also forget the sacred attention, which parliament had ever shown to the private interests and patrimonial rights of individuals?

He would now address himself to those who adopted the opposite extreme; and he thought he should not assume too much, when he said, that if both slavery, and the Slave-trade, could be abolished with safety to their property, it deeply concerned their interests to do it.

He would conclude by stating, that he meant to propose a middle way of proceeding. If there was a number of members in the house, who thought with him, that this trade ought to be ultimately abolished, but yet by moderate measures, which should neither invade the property nor the prejudices of individuals; he wished them to unite, and they might then reduce the question to its proper limits.

Mr. Addington, the speaker, professed himself to be one of those moderate persons called upon by Mr. Dundas. He wished to see some middle measure suggested. The fear of doing injury to the property of others, had hitherto pre-

vented him from giving an opinion against the system, the continuance of which he could not countenance.

Mr. Fox said, that after what had fallen from the two last speakers, he could remain no longer silent. Something so mischievous had come out, and something so like a foundation had been laid for preserving, not only for years to come, but for ever, this detestable traffic, that he should feel himself wanting in his duty, if he were not to deprecate all such deceptions and delusions upon the country.

The honourable gentlemen had called themselves moderate men : but upon this subject he neither felt, nor desired to feel, any thing like a sentiment of moderation. Their speeches had reminded him of a passage in Middleton's life of Cicero. The translation of it was defective, though it would equally suit his purpose. He says, "To enter into a man's house, and kill him, his wife, and family, in the night, is certainly a most heinous crime, and deserving of death ; but to break open his house, to murder him, his wife, and all his children, in the night, may be still very right, provided it be done with moderation." Now, was there any thing more absurd in this passage, than to say, that the Slave-trade might be carried on with moderation ; for, if you could not rob or murder a single man with moderation, with what moderation could you pillage and wound a whole nation ? In fact, the question of the abolition was simply a question of justice. It was only, whether we should authorize by law, respecting Africa, the commission of crimes for which, in this country, we should forfeit our lives ; notwithstanding which, it was to be treated, in the opinion of these honourable gentlemen, with moderation.

He would give his opinion of this traffic, in a few words. He believed it to be impolitic ; he knew it to be inhuman ; he was certain it was unjust ; he thought it so inhuman and

unjust, that, if the colonies could not be cultivated without it, they ought not to be cultivated at all. It would be much better for us to be without them, than not to abolish the Slave-trade. He hoped therefore that members would this night act the part which would do them honour. He declared, that whether he should vote in a large minority or a small one, he would never give up the cause. Whether in the house of parliament, or out of it, in whatever situation he might ever be, as long as he had a voice to speak, this question should never be at rest. Believing the trade to be of the nature of crimes and pollutions, which stained the honour of the country, he would never relax his efforts. It was his duty to prevent man from preying upon man; and if he and his friends should die, before they had attained their glorious object, he hoped there would never be wanting men alive to their duty, who would continue to labour till the evil should be wholly done away. If the situation of the Africans was as happy as servitude could make them, he could not consent to the enormous crime of selling man to man; nor permit a practice to continue, which put an entire bar to the civilization of one quarter of the globe.

Mr. Dundas rose again, but it was only to move an amendment, namely, that the word "gradually" should be inserted before the words "to be abolished" in Mr. Wilberforce's motion.

Mr. Este wished the debate to be adjourned.

He allowed there were many enormities in the trade, which called for regulation. There were two propositions before the house: the one for the immediate, and the other for the gradual abolition of the trade. He thought that members should be allowed time to compare their respective merits. At present his own opinion was, that gradual

abolition would answer the end proposed in the least exceptionable manner. \*

Mr. Pitt rejoiced that the debate had taken a turn, which contracted the question into such narrow limits. The matter then in dispute was merely as to the time at which the abolition should take place. He therefore congratulated the house, the country, and the world, that this great point had been gained; that we might now consider this trade as having received its condemnation; that this *curse* of mankind was seen in its true light; and that the greatest stigma on our national character, which ever yet existed, was about to be removed! Mankind, he trusted, were now likely to be delivered from one of the greatest practical evils that ever afflicted the human race; from the most severe and extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world.

He would consider the proposition of his right honourable friend Mr. Dundas; that, on account of some patrimonial rights of the West Indians, the prohibition of the Slave-trade would be an invasion of their legal inheritance. He would first observe, that, if this argument was worth any thing, it applied just as much to gradual as to immediate abolition. He had no doubt, that, at whatever period we should say the trade should cease, it would be equally set up; for it would certainly be just as good an argument against the measure in seventy years hence, as it was against it now. It implied also, that parliament had no right to stop the importations. But had this detestable traffic received such a sanction, as placed it more out of the jurisdiction of the legislature for ever after, than any other branch of our trade? In what a situation did the proposition of his honourable friend place the legislature of Great Britain! It was scarcely possible to lay a duty on any one article, which might not in some way affect the property of

individuals. But if the laws respecting the Slave-trade implied a contract for its perpetual continuance, the house could never regulate any other of the branches of our national commerce.

But any contract for the promotion of this trade must, in his opinion, have been void from the beginning: for if it was an outrage upon justice, and only another name for fraud, robbery, and murder, what pledge could devolve upon the legislature, to incur the obligation of becoming principals in the commission of such enormities, by sanctioning their continuance?

But he would appeal to the acts themselves. That of 23 George II. c. 31, was the one upon which the greatest stress was laid. How would the house be surprised to hear, that the very outrages committed in the prosecution of this trade, had been forbidden by that act! "No master of a ship trading to Africa," says the act, "shall by fraud, force, or violence, or by any indirect practice whatever, take on board or carry away from that coast any Negro, or native of that country, or commit any violence on the natives, to the prejudice of the said trade; and every person so offending, shall for every such offence, forfeit one hundred pounds." But the whole trade had been demonstrated to be a system of fraud, force, and violence; and therefore the contract was daily violated, under which the parliament allowed it to continue.

But why had the trade ever been permitted at all? The preamble of the act would show; "Whereas the trade to and from Africa, is very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary for supplying the plantations and colonies thereunto belonging, with a sufficient number of Negroes, at reasonable rates, and for that purpose the said trade should be carried on." Here then we might see what the parlia-

ment had in view, when it passed this act. But no one of the occasions, on which it grounded its proceedings, now existed. He would plead, then, the act itself as an argument for the abolition. If it had been proved that, instead of being very advantageous to Great Britain, it was the most destructive to her interests; that it was the ruin of her seamen; that it stopped the extension of her manufactures: if it had been proved, in the second place, that it was not now necessary for the supply of our plantations with Negroes; if it had been further established, that it was from the beginning, contrary to the first principles of justice, and consequently that a pledge for its continuance, had one been attempted to be given, must have been absolutely void; where in this act of parliament was the contract to be found, by which Britain was bound, as she was said to be, never to listen to her own true interests, and to the cries of the natives of Africa? Was it not clear, that all argument, founded on the supposed pledge of parliament, made against those who employed it?

On the great subject of the civilization of Africa, which, he confessed, was near his heart, he would yet add a few observations. And first he would say, that the present deplorable state of that country, especially when we reflected that her chief calamities were to be ascribed to us, called for our generous aid, rather than justified any despair, on our part, of her recovery, and still less a repetition of our injuries. On what ground of theory or history did we act, when we supposed that she was never to be reclaimed? There was a time, which it might be now fit to call to remembrance, when human sacrifices, and even this very practice of the Slave-trade, existed in our own island. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's History of Great Britain, were formerly an established article of our exports.

"Great numbers," he says, "were exported, like cattle, from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed for sale in the Roman market." "Adultery, witchcraft, and debt," says the same historian, "were probably some of the chief sources of supplying the Roman market with British slaves: prisoners taken in war, were added to the number: there might be also among them some unfortunate gamblers, who, after having lost all their goods, at length, staked themselves, their wives, and their children." Now every one of these sources of slavery, had been stated to be, at this hour, a source of slavery in Africa. If these practices, therefore, were to be admitted as proofs of the natural incapacity of its inhabitants, why might they not have been applied to ancient Britain? Why might not then some Roman senator, pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, that these were a people, who were destined never to be free; who were without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of Nature, below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world?

If then we viewed with gratitude the contrast between our present and our former situation; if we shuddered to think of the misery, which would still have overwhelmed us, had our country continued to the present times, through some cruel policy, to be the mart for slaves to the more civilized nations of the world; God forbid, that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and exclude the sight of knowledge from her coasts, which had reached every other quarter of the globe!

He trusted we should no longer continue this commerce; and that we should no longer consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon on the natives of Africa, in restoring

them to the rank of human beings. He trusted we should not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the Slave-trade, we gave them the same common chance of civilization, with other parts of the world. If we listened to the voice of reason and duty this night, some of us might live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turned our eyes with shame. We might live to behold the natives engaged in the calm occupations of industry, and in the pursuit of a just commerce. We might behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which at some happy period in still later times, might blaze with full lustre; and joining their influence to that of pure religion, might illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent.

The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants was, of all the various benefits of the abolition, in his estimation the most extensive and important. He should vote against the adjournment; and he should also oppose every proposition, which tended either to prevent, or even to postpone for an hour, the total abolition of the Slave-trade.

Mr. Pitt having concluded his speech, at about six in the morning, Sir William Dolben, the chairman, proposed the following questions. On the motion of Mr. Dundas, "that the abolition should be gradual;" when the votes for gradual, exceeded those for immediate, by one hundred and ninety-three. to one hundred and twenty-five. He then put the amended question, that "it was the opinion of the committee, that the trade ought to be gradually abolished." The committee having divided again, the votes for a gradual abolition were two hundred and thirty, and those against any abolition, were eighty-five.

After this debate, the committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade held a meeting. They voted their thanks to Mr. Wilberforce, for his motion, and to Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, and those other members of the house, who had supported it. They resolved also, that the house of commons, having determined that the Slave-trade ought to be gradually abolished, had by that decision manifested their opinion, that it was cruel and unjust. They resolved also, that a gradual abolition of it was not an adequate remedy for its injustice and cruelty; neither could it be deemed a compliance with the general wishes of the people, as expressed in their numerous and urgent petitions to parliament. And they resolved lastly, that the interval, in which the Slave-trade should be permitted to continue, afforded a prospect of redoubled cruelties and ravages on the coast of Africa; and that it imposed therefore an additional obligation on every friend to the cause, to use all constitutional means to obtain its immediate abolition.

On the twenty-third of April. the house of commons resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider the subject again; and Mr. Beaufoy was put into the chair.

Mr. Dundas, upon whom the task of introducing a bill for the gradual abolition of the Slave-trade now devolved, rose to offer the outlines of a plan for that purpose. He intended, he said, immediately to abolish that part of the trade. by which we supplied foreigners with slaves. The other part of it was to be continued seven years from the first of January next. He grounded the necessity of its continuance till this time upon the documents of the Negro population in the different islands. In many of these, slaves were imported, but they were re exported nearly in equal numbers. Now all these he considered to be in a

state to go on without future supplies from Africa. Jamaica and the ceded islands retained almost all the slaves imported into them. This he considered as a proof that these had not attained the same desirable state ; and it was therefore necessary, that the trade should be continued longer on this account. It was his intention, however, to provide proper punishments, while it lasted, for abuses both in Africa and the Middle Passage. He would take care, as far as he could, that none but young slaves should be brought from the Coast of Africa. He would encourage establishments there for a new species of traffic. Foreign nations should be invited to concur in the abolition. He should propose a prædial rather than a personal service for the West Indies, and institutions, by which the slaves there should be instructed in religious duties. He concluded by reading several resolutions, which he would leave to the future consideration of the house.

Mr. Pitt then rose. He deprecated the resolutions altogether. He denied also the inferences, which Mr. Dundas had drawn from the West Indian documents relative to the Negro population. He had looked over his own calculations from the same documents again and again, and he would submit them, with all their data, if it should be necessary to the house.

Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Fox held the same language. They contended also, that Mr. Dundas had now proved, a thousand times more strongly than ever, the necessity of immediate abolition. All the resolutions he had read were operative against his own reasoning. The latter observed, that the Slave-traders were in future only to be allowed to steal innocent children, from their disconsolate parents.

After a few observations by lord Sheffield, Mr. Drake, colonel Tarleton, and Mr. Rolle, the house adjourned.

On the twenty-fifth of April it resumed the consideration of the subject. Mr. Dundas then went over his former resolutions, and concluded by moving, "that it should not be lawful to import any African Negroes into any British colonies, in ships owned or navigated by British subjects, at any time after the first of January, 1800."

Lord Mornington, now marquis Wellesley, rose to propose an amendment. He congratulated his countrymen, that the Slave-trade had received its death wound. This traffic was founded in injustice; and between right and wrong there could be no compromise. Africa was not to be sacrificed to the apparent good of the West-Indies.

After many observations, he concluded by moving, "that the year 1793, be substituted in the place of the year 1800."

In the course of the debate, which followed, Mr. Burdon stated his conviction of the necessity of immediate abolition; but he would support the amendment, as the shortest of the terms proposed.

Mr. Robert Thornton would support it also, as the only choice left him. He dared not accede to a motion, by which we were to continue for seven years, to imbrue our hands in innocent blood.

Mr. William Smith exposed the wickedness of restricting the trade to certain ages. The original motion, he said, would only operate as a transfer of cruelty from the aged and the guilty to the young and the innocent. He entreated the house to consider, whether, if it related to their own children, any one of them would vote for it.

Mr. Windham had hitherto felt a reluctance to speaking, not from the abstruseness, but from the simplicity of the subject; but he could no longer be silent, when he observed those arguments of policy creeping again out of

their lurking-places, which had fled before eloquence and truth.

Sir James Johnstone contended for the immediate abolition of the trade. He had introduced the plough into his own plantation in the West-Indies, and he found the land produced more sugar than when cultivated in the ordinary way by slaves. Even for the sake of the planters, he hoped the abolition would not be long delayed.

Mr. Dundas replied : after which a division took place. The number of votes in favour of the original motion were one hundred and fifty-eight, and for the amendment, one hundred and nine.

On the 27th of April the house resumed the subject. Mr. Dundas moved, as before, that the Slave-trade should cease in the year 1800 ; upon which lord Mornington moved, that the year 1795, should be substituted for the latter period.

A division having taken place, the number of votes in favour of the original motion were one hundred and sixty-one, and in favour of lord Mornington's amendment for the year 1795, one hundred and twenty-one. Sir Edward Knatchbull, however, seeing that there was a disposition in the house to bring the matter to a conclusion, and that a middle line would be preferred, moved that the year 1796 should be substituted for the year 1800. Upon this the house divided again ; when there appeared for the original motion only one hundred and thirty-two, but for the amendment one hundred and fifty-one.

The gradual abolition having been now finally agreed upon for the year 1796, a committee was named, which carried the resolution to the lords.

On the eighth of May, the lords were summoned to consider it. Lord Stormont, after having spoken for some

time, moved, that they should hear evidence upon it. Lord Grenville opposed the motion on account of the delay, which would arise from an examination of the witnesses by the house at large ; but he moved that such witnesses should be examined by a committee of the house. Upon this a debate ensued, and afterwards a division ; when the original motion was carried, by sixty-three against thirty-six.

On the 15th of May the lords met again. Evidence was then ordered to be summoned in behalf of those interested in the continuance of the trade. At length it was introduced ; but on the fifth of June, when only seven persons had been examined, a motion was made and carried, that the further examinations should be postponed to the next session.

## SECTION II.

The resolution adopted by the commons that the trade should cease in 1796, was a matter of great joy to many ; and several, in consequence of it, returned to the use of sugar. The committee, however, for the abolition did not view it in the same favourable light. They considered it as a political manœuvre to frustrate the accomplishment of the object.

Parliament having met, Mr. Wilberforce, in February 1793, moved, that the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house on Thursday next, to consider of the circumstances of the Slave-trade. This motion was opposed by Sir William Yonge, who moved, that this day six months should be substituted for Thursday next. A debate ensued : of this, however, as well as of several which followed, I shall give no account ; as it would be tedious to

the reader to hear a repetition of the same arguments. Suffice it to say, that the motion was lost by a majority of sixty-one to fifty-three.

This sudden refusal of the house of commons to renew their own vote of the former year, gave great uneasiness to the friends of the cause. Mr. Wilberforce, however, resolved, that the session should not pass without an attempt to promote it in another form; and accordingly, on the fourteenth of May he moved for leave to bring in a bill to abolish that part of the Slave-trade, by which the British merchants supplied foreigners with slaves. This motion was opposed like the former; but was carried by a majority of seven. The bill was then brought in: and it passed its first and second reading with little opposition; but on the fifth of June, notwithstanding the eloquence of Mr. Pitt and of Mr. Fox, and the very able speeches of Mr. Francis, Mr. Courtenay, and others, it was lost by a majority of thirty-one to twenty-nine.

In the interval between these motions the question experienced in the lords considerable opposition. The duke of Clarence moved, that the house should not proceed in the consideration of the Slave-trade till after the Easter recess. The earl of Abingdon was still more hostile afterwards. He deprecated the new philosophy. It was as full of mischief as the Box of Pandora. The doctrine of the abolition of the Slave-trade was a species of it; and he concluded by moving, that all further consideration of the subject be postponed. To the epithet, then bestowed upon the abolitionists by this nobleman, the duke of Clarence added those of fanatics and hypocrites, among whom he included Mr. Wilberforce by name. All the other lords, however, who were present, manifested such a dislike to the sentiments of the earl of Abingdon, that he withdrew his motion.

After this, the hearing of evidence on the resolution of the house of commons was resumed ; and seven persons were examined before the close of the session.

The committee for the abolition could not view the proceedings of both houses of parliament on this subject during the year 1793, without being alarmed for the fate of their question. In looking to their future services, one thing, and only one, seemed practicable ; and this was necessary ; namely, to complete the new body of evidence, which they had endeavoured to form in the preceding year. The determination to do this, rendered another journey on my part indispensable ; and I undertook it, broken down as my constitution then was, beginning it in September 1793, and completing it in February 1794.

Mr. Wilberforce, in this interval, had digested his plan of operations ; and accordingly, early in the session of 1794, he asked leave to renew his former bill, to abolish that part of the trade, by means of which British merchants supplied foreigners with slaves. This request was opposed by Sir William Yonge ; but it was granted, on a division of the house, by a majority of sixty-three to forty votes.\*

After this, the question was in a desperate state ; for if the commons would not renew their own resolution, and the lords would not abolish the foreign part of the Slave-trade, what hope was there, of success ? It was obvious too, that in the former house, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas voted against each other. In the latter, the lord, chancellor

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\* A bill was accordingly introduced, which passed the Commons, but was finally lost in the house of Peers.

Thurlow opposed every motion in favour of the cause. The committee therefore, were reduced to this ; either they must exert themselves without hope, or they must wait till some change should take place in their favour. As far as I myself was concerned, all exertion was then over. The nervous system was almost shattered to pieces. Both my memory and my hearing failed me. Sudden dizziness seized my head. A confused singing in the ears followed me, wherever I went. On going to bed the very stairs seemed to dance up and down under me, so that, misplacing my foot, I sometimes fell. Talking too, if it continued but half an hour, exhausted me, so that profuse perspirations followed ; and the same effect was produced, even by an active exertion of the mind for the like time. These disorders had been brought on by degrees, in consequence of the severe labours necessarily attached to the promotion of the cause. For seven years I had a correspondence to maintain with four hundred persons, with my own hand. I had some book or other annually to write in behalf of the cause. In this time I had travelled more than thirty-five thousand miles, in search of evidence, and a great part of these journeys in the night. All this time my mind had been on the stretch. It had been bent too, to this one subject ; for I had not even leisure to attend to my own concerns. The various instances of barbarity, which had come successively to my knowledge within this period, had vexed, harassed, and afflicted it. The wound, which these had produced, was rendered still deeper by those cruel disappointments before related, which arose from the reiterated refusal of persons to give their testimony, after I had travelled hundreds of miles in quest of them. But the severest stroke was that inflicted by the persecution, begun and pursued by persons interested in the continuance of the trade, of such witness-

es as had been examined against them; and whom on account of their dependent situation in life, it was most easy to oppress. As I had been the means of bringing these forward on these occasions, they naturally came to me, when thus persecuted, as the author of their miseries and their ruin. From their supplications and wants, it would have been ungenerous and ungrateful to have fled. These different circumstances, by acting together, had at length brought me into the situation just mentioned; and I was therefore obliged, though very reluctantly, to be borne out of the field, where I had placed the great honour and glory of my life.

Mr. Wilberforce and the members of the committee, whose constitutions had not suffered like my own, were still left; and they determined to persevere in the promotion of their great object, as long as their health and their faculties permitted them. The former, accordingly, in the month of February 1795, moved in the house of commons, for leave to bring in a bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. This motion was then necessary, if, according to the resolution of that house, the Slave-trade was to cease in 1796. It was opposed, however, by Sir William Yonge, and unfortunately lost by a majority of seventy-eight, to fifty-seven.

In the year 1796, Mr. Wilberforce renewed his efforts in the commons. He asked leave to bring in a bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade, but in a limited time. The motion was opposed as before; but on a division, there were for it ninety-three, and against it only sixty-seven.

The bill having been brought in, was opposed in its second reading; but it was carried through by a majority of sixty-four to thirty-one.

In a future stage it was opposed again ; but it triumphed by a majority of seventy-six to thirty-one. Mr. Elliott was then put into the chair. Several clauses were adopted ; and the first of March 1797 was fixed for the abolition of the trade : but in the next stage of it, after a long speech from Mr. Dundas, it was lost by a majority of seventy-four, against seventy.

In the year 1798, Mr. Wilberforce asked leave to renew his former bill, to abolish the Slave-trade within a limited time. On a division, there appeared to be for Mr. Wilberforce's motion eighty-three, but against it eighty-seven.

In the year 1799 Mr. Wilberforce, undismayed by these different disappointments, renewed his motion. Colonel M. Wood, Mr. Petrie, and others, among whom were Mr. Windham and Mr. Dundas, opposed it. Mr. Pitt, Fox, W. Smith, Sir William Dolben, Sir R. Milbank, Mr. Hobhouse, and Mr. Canning, supported it.

When the house divided ; it appeared that there were for Mr. Wilberforce's motion seventy-four, but against it eighty-two.

I cannot conclude this section without offering a few remarks. And, first, I may observe, that Mr. Wilberforce, upon whom too much praise cannot be bestowed for his perseverance from year to year, amidst the disheartening circumstances which attended his efforts, brought every new argument to bear, which either the discovery of new light, or the events of the times produced. I may observe also, in justice to the memories of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, that there was no debate within this period, in which they did not take a part ; and in which they did not irradiate others from the profusion of their own light : and, thirdly, that in consequence of the efforts of the three, conjoined with those of others, the great cause of the abolition was secretly gain-

ing ground. Many members who were not connected with the trade, but who had yet hitherto supported it, were on the point of conversion. Though the question had oscillated backwards and forwards, so that an ordinary spectator could have discovered no gleam of hope at these times, nothing is more certain, than that the powerful eloquence then displayed, had smoothed the resistance to it; had shortened its vibrations; and had prepared it for a state of rest.

### SECTION III.

The question had now been brought forward in almost every possible way, and yet had been eventually lost. The total and immediate abolition had been attempted; and then the gradual. The gradual again had been tried for the year 1793, then for 1795, and then for 1796, at which period it was decreed, but never allowed to be executed. An abolition of a part of the trade, as it related to the supply of foreigners with slaves, was the next measure proposed; and when this failed, the abolition of another part of it, as it related to the making of a certain portion of the coast of Africa sacred to liberty, was attempted: but this failed also. Mr. Wilberforce therefore thought it prudent, not to press the abolition as a mere annual measure, but to allow members time to digest the eloquence, which had been bestowed upon it for the last five years, and to wait till some new circumstances should favour its introduction. Accordingly he allowed the years 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803 to pass over, without any further parliamentary notice, than the moving for certain papers; during which he took an opportunity of assuring the house, that he had not

grown cool in the cause, but that he would agitate it in a future session.

The year 1804, was fixed upon for renewed exertion. Among the reasons for fixing upon this year, one may be assigned, namely, that the Irish members, in consequence of the union which had taken place between the two countries, had then all taken their seats in the house of commons; and that most of them were friendly to the cause.

This being the situation of things, Mr. Wilberforce, on the thirtieth of March, asked leave to renew his bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade within a limited time. Mr. Fuller opposed the motion. A debate ensued. Colonel Tarleton, Mr. Devaynes, Mr. Addington, and Mr. Manning spoke against it.

Sir Robert Buxton, Mr. Pitt, Fox, and Barham, spoke in favour of the motion.

Lord de Blaquiere observed, "it was the first time the question had been proposed to Irishmen as legislators. He believed it would be supported by most of them. As to the people of Ireland, he could pledge himself, that they were hostile to this barbarous traffic." An amendment having been proposed by Mr. Manning, a division took place upon it, when leave was given to bring in the bill, by a majority of one hundred and twenty-four, to forty-nine.

On the seventh of June, when the second reading of the bill was moved, it was opposed by Sir William Yonge, Dr. Laurence, Mr. C. Brook, Mr. Dent, and others. The second reading was supported by Sir Ralph Milbank, Mr. Pitt, Fox, William Smith, Whitbread, Francis, Barham, and by Mr. Grenfell, and Sir John Newport. Upon a division, there appeared for the second reading one hundred, and against it forty-two.

On the twenty-seventh of June, the bill was opposed in its last stage, by Sir W. Young, Mr. Dickenson, G. Rose, Addington, and Dent: and supported by Mr. Pitt, W. Smith, Francis, and Barham: when it was carried by a majority of sixty-nine, to thirty-six. It was then taken up to the lords: but on a motion of lord Hawkesbury, then a member of that house, the discussion of it was postponed to the next year.

In the year 1806, Mr. Wilberforce renewed his motion of the former year. Colonel Tarleton, Sir William Yonge, Mr. Fuller, and Mr. Gascoyne opposed it. Leave, however, was given him to introduce his bill.

On the second reading of it, a serious opposition took place; and an amendment was moved, for postponing it till that day six months. The amendment was opposed by Mr. Fox and Mr. Huddleston. The latter could not help lifting his voice against this monstrous traffic in the sinews and blood of man, the toleration of which had so long been the disgrace of the British legislature. He did not charge the enormous guilt resulting from it upon the nation at large; for the nation had washed its hands of it by the numerous petitions it had sent against it; and it had since been a matter of astonishment to all Christendom, how the constitutional guardians of British freedom, should have sanctioned, elsewhere, the greatest system of cruelty and oppression in the world.

The amendment was supported by Sir William Yonge, Sir William Pulteney, colonel Tarleton, Mr. Gascoyne, C. Brook, and Hiley Addington. On dividing the house upon it, there appeared for it seventy-seven, but against it only seventy.

This loss of the question, after it had been carried in the last year by so great a majority, being quite unexpected,

was a matter of severe disappointment; and might have discouraged the friends of the cause, in this infancy of their renewed efforts, if they had not discovered the reason of its failure. After due consideration it appeared, that no fewer than nine members, who had never been absent once in sixteen years when it was agitated, gave way to engagements on the day of the motion, from a belief that it was safe. It appeared also, that out of the great number of Irish members, who supported it in the former year, only nine were in the house, when it was lost. It appeared also that, previously to this event, a canvass, more importunate than had been heard of on any former occasion, had been made among the latter, by those interested in the continuance of the trade. Many of these, unacquainted with the detail of the subject, like the English members, admitted the dismal representations, which were then made to them. The desire of doing good on the one hand, and the fear of doing injury on the other, perplexed them; and in this dubious state they absented themselves at the time mentioned.

The causes of the failure having been found accidental, and capable of a remedy, it was resolved, that an attempt should be made immediately in the house in a new form. Accordingly, lord Henry Petty signified his intention of bringing in a bill, for the abolition of the foreign part of the Slave-trade; but the impeachment of lord Melville, and other weighty matters coming on, the notice was not acted upon in that session.

It was now almost certain, to the inexpressible joy of the committee, that the cause, with proper vigilance, could be carried in the next session, in the house of commons. It became them therefore to prepare to support it. In advert-  
ing to measures for this purpose, it occurred to them, that

the house of lords, if the question should be then carried to them from the commons, might insist upon hearing evidence on the general subject. But, alas! even the body of witnesses, which had been last collected, was broken by death or dispersion. It was therefore to be formed again. In this situation it devolved upon me, as I had now returned to the committee, after an absence of nine years, to take another journey for this purpose.

This journey I performed with extraordinary success. In the course of it I had also much satisfaction on another account. I found the old friends of the cause still faithful to it. It was remarkable, however, that the youth of the rising generation, knew but little about the question. For the last eight or nine years, the committee had not circulated any books; and the debates in the commons, during that time, had not furnished them with the means of an adequate knowledge concerning it. When, however, I conversed with these, as I travelled along, I discovered a profound attention to what I said; an earnest desire to know more of the subject; and a generous warmth in favour of the injured Africans, which I foresaw could soon be turned into enthusiasm. Hence I perceived that the cause furnished us with endless sources of rallying; and that the ardour, which we had seen with so much admiration in former years, could be easily renewed.

I had scarcely finished my journey, when Mr. Pitt died. This event took place in January 1806. I shall stop therefore to make a few observations upon his character, as it related to this cause. This I feel myself bound in justice to do, because his sincerity towards it, has been generally questioned.

The way, in which Mr. Pitt became acquainted with this question, has already been explained. A few doubts

having been removed, when it was first started, he professed himself a friend to the abolition. The first proof which he gave of his friendship to it, is known but to few; but it is, nevertheless true, that so early as in 1788, he occasioned a communication to be made to the French government, in which he recommended an union of the two countries for the promotion of the great measure. This proposition seemed to be then new and strange to the court of France; and the answer was not favourable.

From this time his efforts were reduced within the boundaries of his own power. As far, however, as he had scope, he exerted them. If we look at him in his parliamentary capacity, it must be acknowledged by all, that he took an active, strenuous, and consistent part; and this year after year, by which he realized his professions. In my own private communications with him, which were frequent, he never failed to give proofs of a similar disposition. I had always free access to him. I had no previous note or letter to write for admission. Whatever papers I wanted, he ordered. He exhibited also in his conversation with me on these occasions, marks of a more than ordinary interest in the welfare of the cause. Among the subjects, which were then started, there was one, which was always near his heart. This was the civilization of Africa. He looked upon this great work, as a debt due to that continent, for the many injuries we had inflicted upon it: and had the abolition succeeded sooner, as in the infancy of his exertions he had hoped, I know he had a plan, suited no doubt, to the capaciousness of his own mind, for such establishments in Africa, as he conceived would promote in due time this important end.

Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, having been called to the head of the executive government on the death of Mr. Pitt,

the cause was ushered into parliament under new auspices. In a former year his majesty had issued a proclamation, by which British merchants were forbidden, with certain defined exceptions, to import slaves into the colonies, which had been conquered by the British arms in the course of the war. This circumstance afforded an opportunity of trying the question in the house of commons, with the greatest hope of success. Accordingly Sir A. Pigott, the attorney-general, as an officer of the crown, brought in a bill on the thirty-first of March 1806, the first object of which was, to give effect to the proclamation now mentioned. The second was, to prohibit British subjects from being engaged in importing slaves into the colonies of any foreign power, whether hostile or neutral. And the third was, to prohibit British subjects, and British capital, from being employed in carrying on a Slave trade in foreign ships: and also to prevent the outfit of foreign ships from British ports.

Sir A. Pigott, on the introduction of this bill, made an appropriate speech. The bill was supported by Mr. Fox, Sir William Yonge, Mr. Brook, and Mr. Bagwell; but opposed by generals Tarleton and Gascoyne, Mr. Rose, Sir Robert Peele, and Sir Charles Price. On the third reading, a division being called for, there appeared for it thirty-five, and against it only thirteen.

On the seventh of May it was introduced into the lords. The supporters of it there were, the duke of Gloucester, lord Grenville, the bishops of London and St. Asaph, the earl of Buckinghamshire, and the lords Holland, Lauderdale, Auckland, Sidmouth, and Ellenborough. The opposers were, the dukes of Clarence and Sussex, the marquiss of Sligo, the earl of Westmoreland, and the lords Eldon and Sheffield. At length a division took place, when there appeared to be in favour of it forty-three, and against it eighteen.

During the discussions, to which this bill gave birth, lord Grenville and Mr. Fox declared in substance, in their respective houses of parliament, that they felt the question of the Slave-trade to be one, which involved the dearest interests of humanity, and the most urgent claims of policy, justice, and religion ; and that, should they succeed in effecting its abolition, they would regard that success as entailing more true glory on their administration, and more honour and advantage on their country, than any other measure, in which they could be engaged. The bill having passed, the first which dismembered this cruel trade, it was thought proper to follow it up in a prudent manner ; and, as there was not then time, in the advanced period of the session, to bring in another for the total extinction of it, to move a resolution, by which both houses should record those principles, on which the propriety of the latter measure was founded. It was judged also expedient that Mr. Fox, as the prime minister in the house of commons, should introduce it there.

On the tenth of June Mr. Fox rose. He began by saying that the motion, with which he should conclude, would tend in its consequences to effect the total abolition of the Slave-trade ; and he confessed that, since he had sat in that house, a period of between thirty and forty years, if he had done nothing else, but had only been instrumental in carrying through this measure, he should think his life well spent ; and should retire quite satisfied, that he had not lived in vain.

He combated the argument, that the abolition would ruin the West Indian islands. In doing this, he paid a handsome compliment to the memory of Mr. Pitt, whose speech upon this particular point was, he said, the most powerful and convincing, of any he had ever heard. Indeed they, who had not heard it, could have no notion of it.

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He called upon the friends of this great man to show their respect for his memory by their votes ; and he concluded with moving, "that this house, considering the African Slave-trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and policy, will, with all practicable expedition, take effectual measures for the abolition of the said trade, in such a manner, and at such a period, as may be deemed advisable."

Sir Ralph Milbank rose, and seconded the motion.

General Tarleton rose next. He deprecated the abolition, on account of the effect which it would have on the trade and revenue of the country.

Mr. Francis said, the merchants of Liverpool were at liberty to ask for compensation ; but he, for one, would never grant it for the loss of a trade, which had been declared to be contrary to humanity and justice. As an uniform friend to this great cause, he wished Mr. Fox had not introduced a resolution, but a real bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. He believed that both houses were then disposed to do it away. He wished the golden opportunity might not be lost.

Lord Henry Petty proceeded to state his opinion on the trade ; which was, that it was contrary to justice, humanity, and sound policy ; all of which he considered to be inseparable. On its commencement in Africa the wickedness began. It produced there fraud and violence, robbery and murder. It gave birth to false accusations, and a mockery of justice. It was the parent of every crime, which could at once degrade and afflict the human race. After spreading vice and misery all over this continent, it doomed its unhappy victims to hardships and cruelties, which were worse than death. The first of these was conspicuous in their transportation. It brought in its train the worst of all

moral effects, not only as it respected the poor slaves, when transported to the colonies, but as it respected those, who had concerns with them there. The arbitrary power which it conferred, afforded men of bad dispositions, full scope for the exercise of their passions; and it rendered men, constitutionally of good dispositions, callous to the misery of others. Thus it depraved the nature of all, who were connected with it. These considerations had made him a friend to the abolition, from the time he was capable of reasoning upon it.

He proved, by a number of facts, the folly of the argument, that the Africans laboured under such a total degradation of mental and moral faculties, that they were made for slavery.

After making observations, relative to the co-operation of foreign powers in this great work, he hoped that the house would not suffer itself to be drawn, either by opposition or by ridicule, to the right or to the left; but that it would advance straight forward to the accomplishment of the most magnanimous act of justice, that was ever achieved by any legislature in the world.

Mr. Canning renewed his professions of friendship to the cause. He did not like the present resolution; yet he would vote for it. He should have been better pleased with a bill, which would strike at once at the root of this detestable commerce.

Mr. William Smith noticed, in a striking manner, the different inconsistencies in the arguments of those, who contended for the continuance of the trade.

Mr. Fox took a view of all the arguments, which had been advanced by the opponents of the abolition; and having given an appropriate answer to each, the house divided; when there appeared for the resolution, one hundred and fourteen, and against it but fifteen.

Immediately after this division, Mr. Wilberforce moved an address to his majesty, "praying that he would be graciously pleased to direct a negotiation to be entered into, by which foreign powers should be invited to co-operate with his majesty, in measures to be adopted for the abolition of the African Slave-trade."

This address was carried without a division. It was also moved and carried, that "these resolutions be communicated to the lords; and that their concurrence should be desired therein."

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On the twenty-fourth of June, the lords met to consider of the resolution and address. The earl of Westmoreland proposed, that both counsel and evidence should be heard against them; but his proposition was overruled.

Lord Grenville then read the resolution of the commons. This resolution, he said, stated first, that the Slave-trade was contrary to humanity, justice, and sound policy. That it was contrary to humanity was obvious; for humanity might be said to be sympathy for the distress of others, or a desire to accomplish benevolent ends by good means. But did not the Slave-trade convey ideas the very reverse of this definition? It deprived men of all those comforts, in which it pleased the Creator to make the happiness of his creatures to consist, of the blessings of society, of the charities of the dear relationships of husband, wife, father, son, and kindred; of the due discharge of the relative duties of these, and of that freedom, which in its pure and natural sense, was one of the greatest gifts of God to man.

Having shown the inhumanity, he would proceed to the second point in the resolution, or the injustice, of the trade. We had two ideas of justice; first, as it belonged to society by virtue of a social compact; and, secondly, as it belonged to men, not as citizens of a community, but as beings of one common nature. In a state of nature, man had a right to the fruit of his own labour, absolutely to himself; and one of the main purposes, for which he entered into society, was, that he might be better protected in the possession of his rights. In both cases therefore, it was manifestly unjust, that a man should be made to labour during the whole of his life, and yet have no benefit from his labour. Hence the Slave-trade, and the colonial slavery, were a violation of the very principle, upon which all law for the protection of property was founded. Whatever benefit was derived from that trade to an individual, it was derived from dishonour and dishonesty. He forced from the unhappy victim of it, that, which the latter did not wish to give him; and he gave to the same victim that, which he in vain attempted to show was an equivalent to the thing he took, it being a thing for which there was no equivalent; and which, if he had not obtained by force, he would not have possessed at all.

With respect to the impolicy of the trade, the third point in the resolution, he would say at once, that whatever was *inhuman* and unjust must be impolitic. He had, however,

no objection to argue the point upon its own particular merits. And, first, he would observe, that a great man, Mr. Pitt, now no more, had exerted his vast powers on many subjects, to the admiration of his hearers; but on none more successfully, than on the subject of the abolition of the Slave trade. He proved, after making an allowance for the price paid for the slaves in the West-Indies, for the loss of them in the seasoning, and for the expense of maintaining them afterwards, and comparing these particulars with the amount in value of their labour there, that the evils endured by the victims of the traffic, were no gain to the master, in whose service they took place. Indeed Mr. Long had laid it down in his history of Jamaica, that the best way to secure the planters from ruin, would be to do that, which the resolution recommended. It was notorious, that when any planter was in distress, and sought to relieve himself by increasing the labour on his estate, by means of the purchase of new slaves, the measure invariably tended to his destruction. What then was the importation of fresh Africans, but a system tending to the general ruin of the islands?

To expose the impolicy of the trade further, he would observe, that it was an allowed axiom, that as the condition of man was improved, he became more useful. The history of our own country, in very early times, exhibited instances of internal slavery, and this, to a considerable extent. But we should find that precisely in proportion as that slavery was ameliorated, the power and prosperity of the country flourished. This was exactly applicable to the case in question.

Dr. Porteous, Bishop of London, said, the Slave-trade was contrary to the principles of the religion we professed. It was not superfluous to say this, when it had been so frequently asserted, that it was sanctioned both by the Jewish and the Christian dispensation. With respect to the Jews, he would observe, that there was no such thing as perpetual slavery among them. Their slaves were of two kinds, those of their own nation, and those from the country round about them. The former were to be set free on the seventh year, and the rest, of whatever nation, on the fiftieth, or on the year of Jubilee. With respect to the Christian dispensation, it was a libel to say, that it countenanced such a traffic. It opposed it both in its spirit, and in its principle. Nay, it opposed it positively; for it classed men-steal-

ers, or slave-traders, among the murderers of fathers and mothers, and the most profane criminals upon earth.

The lord chancellor Erskine, confessed, that he was not satisfied with his own conduct on this subject. He acknowledged with deep contrition, that, during the time he was a member of the other house, he had not once attended, when this great question was discussed.

In the West-Indies, he could say personally, that the slaves were well-treated, where he had an opportunity of seeing them. But no judgment was to be formed there with respect to the evils complained of. They must be appreciated as they existed in the trade. Of these he had also been an eye-witness. It was on this account that he felt contrition for not having attended the house on this subject; for there were some cruelties in this traffic, which the human imagination could not aggravate. He had witnessed such scenes over the whole coast of Africa: and he could say, that, if their lordships could only have a sudden glimpse of them, they would be struck with horror; and would be astonished, that they could ever have been permitted to exist. What then would they say to their continuance year after year, and from age to age.

The Bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. Horsely, said, that, allowing the slaves in the West-Indies even to be pampered with delicacies, or to be put to rest on a bed of roses, they could not be happy; for—— a slave would be still a slave. The question, however, was not concerning the alteration of their condition, but whether we should abolish the practice, by which they were put into that condition? Whether it was humane, just, and politic in us so to place them? This question was easily answered; for he found it difficult to form any one notion of humanity, which did not include a desire of promoting the happiness of others; and he knew of no other justice than that, which was founded on the principle of doing to others, as we would wish they should do to us. And these principles of humanity and justice were so clear, that he found it difficult to make them clearer. Perhaps no difficulty was greater, than that of arguing a self-evident proposition: and such he took to be the character of the proposition, that the Slave-trade was inhuman and unjust.

Lord Holland, wished most heartily for the total abolition of the trade. He was convinced, that it was both inhuman, unjust, and impolitic. This had always been his opinion as an individual, since he was capable of forming

one. It was his opinion then as a legislator. It was his opinion as a colonial proprietor; and it was his opinion as an Englishman, wishing for the prosperity of the British empire.

Earl Stanhope said, he would not detain their Lordships long. It had been asserted, he said, that all the horrors of St. Domingo, were the consequence of the speculative opinions, which were current in a neighbouring kingdom, on the subject of liberty. They had, he said, no such origin. They were owing to two causes; first, to the vast number of Negroes recently imported into that island; and, secondly, to a scandalous breach of faith by the French legislature. This legislature held out the idea not only of the abolition of the Slave-trade, but also of all slavery; but it broke its word. It held forth the rights of man to the whole human race: and then, in practice, it most infamously abandoned every article in these rights; so that it became the scorn of all the enlightened and virtuous part of mankind. These were the great causes of the miseries of St. Domingo, and not the speculative opinions of France.

Earl Spencer said, that the amelioration of the condition of the slaves, was an object which might be effected in the West Indies; but he was certain, that the most effectual way of improving it, would be by the total and immediate abolition of the Slave-trade; and for that reason he would support the resolution. He would not enter into the discussion of the general subject at present. He was convinced that the trade was what the resolution stated it to be, inhuman, unjust, and impolitic. He wished therefore, most earnestly indeed, for its abolition. As to the mode of effecting it, it should be such, as would be attended with the least inconvenience to all parties. At the same time, he would not allow small inconveniencies to stand in the way of the great claims of humanity, justice, and religion.

The question was then put on the resolution, and carried by a majority of forty-one, to twenty. The same address also to his majesty, which had been agreed upon by the commons, was directly afterward moved. This also was carried, but without the necessity of a division.

## SECTION IV.

It was impossible for the committee to look back to the proceedings of the last session, as they related to the great question under their care, without feeling a profusion of joy, as well as of gratitude to those, by whose virtuous endeavours they had taken place. But, alas, how few of our earthly pleasures come to us without alloy ! a melancholy event succeeded. We had the painful intelligence, in the month of October, 1806, that one of the oldest and warmest friends of the cause, was then numbered with the dead.

Of the character of Mr. Fox, as it related to this cause, I am bound to take notice. And, first, I may observe, that he professed an attachment to it almost as soon as it was ushered into the world. Early in the year 1785, when he was waited upon by a deputation of the committee, his language was, as has been already mentioned, "that he would support their object to its fullest extent, being convinced that there was no remedy for the evil, but in the total abolition of the trade."

His subsequent conduct evinced the sincerity of his promises. He was constant in his attendance in parliament, whenever the question was brought forward ; and he never failed to exert his powerful eloquence in its favour. The countenance, indeed, which he gave it, was of the greatest importance to its welfare ; for most of his parliamentary friends, who followed his general political sentiments, patronized it also. By the aid of these, joined to that of the private friends of Mr. Pitt, and of other members, who espoused it without reference to party, it was always so upheld, that after the year 1791, no one of the defeats which it sustained, was disgraceful. The majority on the side of those interested in the continuance of the trade, was always so trifling, that the abolitionists were preserved a formidable body, and their cause respectable.

I never heard whether Mr. Fox, when he came into power, made any stipulations with his majesty on the subject of the Slave-trade : but this I know, that he determined upon the abolition of it, if it were practicable, as the highest glory of his administration, and as the greatest earthly blessing which it was in the power of the government to bestow ; and that he took considerable pains to convince some of his colleagues in the cabinet, of the propriety of the measure.

Before the bill to prevent the sailing of any new vessel in the trade after the first of August, was publicly disclosed, it was suggested to him, that the session was nearly over; that he might possibly weary both houses by another motion on the subject; and that if he were to lose it, or to experience a diminution of his majorities in either, he might injure the cause, which was then on the road to triumph. To this objection he replied, "that he believed both houses were disposed to get rid of the trade; that his own life was precarious; that if he omitted to serve the injured Africans on this occasion, he might have no other opportunity of doing it; and that he dared not, under these circumstances, neglect so great a duty."

This prediction relative to himself became unfortunately verified; for his constitution, after this began to decline, till at length his mortal destiny, in the eyes of his medical attendants, was sealed. But even then, when removed by pain and sickness from the discussion of political subjects, he never forgot this cause. In his own sufferings, he was not unmindful of those of the injured Africans. "Two things," said he, on his death bed, "I wish earnestly to see accomplished....peace with Europe, and the abolition of the Slave-trade." But knowing well, that we could much better protect ourselves against our own external enemies, than this helpless people against their oppressors, he added, "but of the two, I wish the latter."

At length the session of 1807 commenced. It was judged advisable by lord Grenville, that the expected motion on this subject should, contrary to the practice hitherto adopted, be agitated first in the lords. Accordingly, on the second of January, he presented a bill, called an act for the abolition of the Slave-trade; but he then proposed only to print it, and to let it lie on the table, that it might be maturely considered, before it should be discussed.

On the fourth, no less than four counsel were heard against the bill.

On the fifth the debate commenced. But of this I shall give no detailed account; nor, indeed, of any of those which followed it. They, who spoke in favour of the abolition, said very little that was new concerning it. They, who spoke against it, brought forward, as usual, nothing but negative assertions, and fanciful conjectures.

Lord Grenville opened the debate by a very luminous speech. He was supported by the duke of Gloucester, the

bishop of Durham, Dr. Barrington, the earls Moira, Selkirk, and Roslyn, and the lords Holland, King, and Hood. The opponents of the bill were the duke of Clarence, the earls Westmoreland and St. Vincent, and the lords Sidmouth, Eldon, and Hawkesbury.

The question being called for at four o'clock in the morning, it appeared that the personal votes and proxies in favour of lord Grenville's motion, amounted to one hundred, and those against it to thirty-six. Thus passed the first bill in England, which decreed, that the African Slave-trade should cease.

On the tenth of February, the bill was carried to the house of commons. On the twentieth, counsel were heard against it; after which, by agreement, the second reading of it took place. On the twenty third, the question being put for the commitment of it, lord viscount Howick, now earl Grey, began an eloquent speech. After he had proceeded in it some way, he begged leave to enter his protest against certain principles of relative justice, which had been laid down. "The merchants and planters," said he, "have an undoubted right, in common with other subjects of the realm, to demand justice at our hands. But that, which they denominate justice, does not correspond with the legitimate character of that virtue: for they call upon us to violate the rights of others, and to transgress our own moral duties. That, which they distinguish as justice, involves in itself the greatest injury to others. It is not in fact justice, which they demand, but....favour....and favour to themselves, at the expense of the most grievous oppression of their fellow-creatures."

He then entered into a refutation of the various objections which had been made to the abolition, in an eloquent and perspicuous manner; and concluded by appealing to the great authorities of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, in behalf of the proposed measure. "These precious ornaments," he said, "of their age and country, had examined the subject with all the force of their capacious minds. On this question they had dismissed all animosity; all difference of opinion; and had proceeded in union; and he believed, that the best tribute of respect we could show, or the most splendid monument we could raise to their memories, would be by the adoption of the glorious measure of the abolition of the Slave-trade."

Lord Howick was supported by Mr. Roseoe, who was then one of the members for Liverpool; by Mr. Lushington, Mr. Fawkes, lord Mahon, lord Milton, sir John Doyle, sir Samuel Romilly, Mr. Wilberforce, and earl Percy; the latter of whom wished that a clause might be put into the bill, by which all the children of slaves, born after January 1810, should be made free. General Gascoyne and Mr. Hibbert opposed the bill. Mr. Manning hoped that compensation would be made to the planters in case of loss. Mr. Bathurst and Mr. Hiley Addington preferred a plan for gradual abolition to the present mode. These having spoken, it appeared on a division, that there were for the question, two hundred and eighty-three, and against it only sixteen.

Of this majority I cannot but remark, that it was probably the largest that was ever announced on any occasion, where the house was called upon to divide. I must observe also, that there was such an enthusiasm among the members at this time, that there appeared to be the same kind and degree of feeling, as manifested itself within the same walls in the year 1788, when the question was first started. This enthusiasm too, which was of a moral nature, was so powerful, that it seemed even to extend to a conversion of the heart: for several of the old opponents of this righteous cause went away, unable to vote against it; while others of them staid in their places, and voted in its favour.

On the twenty-seventh of February, lord Howick moved, that the house resolve itself into a committee, on the bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. Sir C. Pole, Mr. Hagh-an, Brown. Bathurst, Windham, and Fuller opposed the motion; and sir R. Milbank, and Mr. Wayne. Barham, Courtenay, Montague, Jacob, Whitbread, and Herbert, of Kerry, supported it. At length the committee was allowed to sit *pro forma*, and Mr. Hobhouse was put into the chair. The bill then went through it, and, the house being resumed, the report was received and read.

On the sixth of March, when the committee sat again, sir C. Pole moved, that the year 1812 be substituted for the year 1807, as the time when the trade should be abolished. This amendment produced a long debate. At length, on a division, there appeared to be one hundred and twenty-five against the amendment, and for it only seventeen. The chairman then read the bill, and it was agreed that he should report it, with the amendments on Monday.

The bill enacted, that no vessel should clear out for slaves from any port within the British dominions, after the first of May 1807; and that no slave should be landed in the colonies after the first of March, 1808.

On Wednesday, the eighteenth, lord Howick, accompanied by Mr. Wilberforce and others, carried the bill to the lords. Lord Grenville, on receiving it, moved that it should be printed, and that, if this process could be finished by Monday, it should be taken into consideration on that day. The reason of this extraordinary haste was, that his majesty, displeased with the introduction of the Roman Catholic officers' bill into the commons, had signified his intention to the members of the existing administration, that they were to be displaced.

On Monday, the twenty-third, the house of lords met. Such extraordinary diligence had been used in printing the bill, that it was then ready. Lord Grenville immediately brought it forward. The earl of Westmoreland and the marquis of Sligo opposed it. The duke of Norfolk and the bishop of Llandaff, Dr. Watson, supported it. The latter said, that this great act of justice would be recorded in heaven. The amendments were severally adopted without a division. But here an omission of three words was discovered, namely, "country, territory, or place," which, if not rectified, might defeat the purposes of the bill. An amendment was immediately proposed and carried. Thus the bill received the last sanction of the peers. Lord Grenville then congratulated the house on the completion, on its part, of the most glorious measure, that had ever been adopted by any legislative body in the world.

The amendment, now mentioned, occasioned the bill to be sent back to the commons. On the twenty-fourth, on the motion of lord Howick, it was immediately taken into consideration there, and agreed to; and it was carried back to the lords, as approved of, on the same day.

But though the bill had now passed both houses, there was an awful fear throughout the kingdom, lest it should not receive the royal assent, before the ministry was dissolved. This event took place the next day; for on Wednesday the twenty-fifth, at half past eleven in the morning, his majesty's message was delivered to the different members of it, that they were then to wait upon him to deliver up the seals of their offices. It then appeared that a com-

mission for the royal assent to this bill among others, had been obtained. This commission was instantly opened by the lord chancellor, Erskine, who was accompanied by the lords Holland and Auckland; and as the clock struck twelve, just when the sun was in its meridian splendour to witness this august act, the establishment of a *Magna Charta* for Africa in Britain, and to sanction it by its most vivid and glorious beams, it was completed. The ceremony being over, the seals of the respective offices were delivered up; so that the execution of this commission was the last act of the administration of Lord Grenville; an administration, which, on account of its virtuous exertions in behalf of the oppressed African race, will pass to posterity, living through successive generations, in the love and gratitude of the most virtuous of mankind.

Thus ended one of the most glorious contests, after a continuance for twenty years, of any ever carried on in any age or country. A contest, not of brutal violence, but of reason. A contest between those, who felt deeply for the happiness and the honour of their fellow-creatures, and those, who, through vicious custom and the impulse of avarice, had trampled under-foot the sacred rights of their nature, and had even attempted to efface all title to the divine image from their minds.

Of the immense advantages of this contest, I know not how to speak. Indeed, the very agitation of the question, which it involved, has been highly important. Never was the heart of man so expanded. Never were its generous sympathies so generally and so perseveringly excited. These sympathies, thus called into existence, have been useful in the preservation of a national virtue. For any thing we know, they may have contributed greatly to form a counteracting balance against the malignant spirit, generated by our almost incessant wars during this period, so as to have preserved us from barbarism.

It has been useful also in the discrimination of moral character. In private life, it has enabled us to distinguish the virtuous from the more vicious part of the community.\*



\* I have had occasion to know many thousand persons in the course of my travels on this subject; and I can truly say, that the part which these took on this great question, was always a true criterion of their moral character.

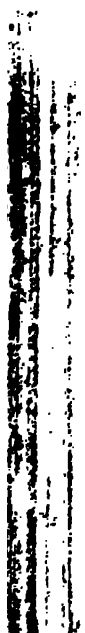
It has shown the general philanthropist. It has unmasked the vicious in spite of his pretension to virtue. It has afforded us the same knowledge in public life. It has separated the moral statesman from the wicked politician. It has shown us who, in the legislative and executive offices of our country, are fit to save, and who to destroy a nation.

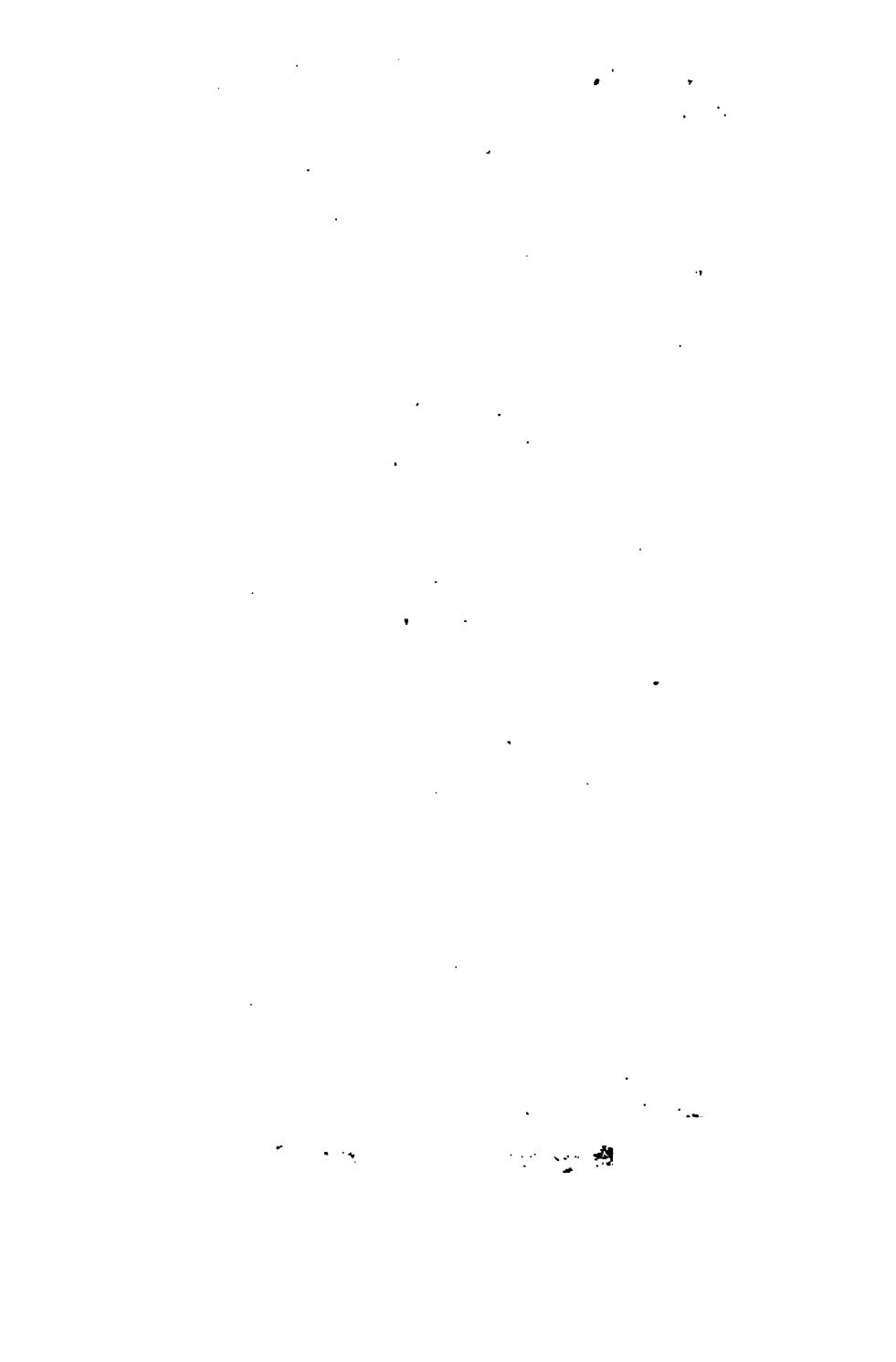
With respect to the end obtained by this contest, or the great measure of the abolition of the Slave-trade as it has now passed, I know not how to appreciate its importance. To our own country, indeed, it is invaluable. We have lived, in consequence of it, to see the day, when it has been recorded as a principle in our legislation, that commerce itself shall have its moral boundaries. We have lived to see the day, when we are likely to be delivered from the contagion of the most barbarous opinions. They, who supported this wicked traffic, virtually denied, that man was a moral being. They substituted the law of force for the law of reason. But the great Act now under our consideration, has banished the impious doctrine, and restored the rational creature to his moral rights. Nor is it a matter of less pleasing consideration, that, at this awful crisis, when the constitutions of kingdoms are on the point of dissolution, the stain of the blood of Africa is no longer upon us, or that we have been freed, alas, if it be not too late! from a load of guilt, which has long hung like a mill-stone about our necks, ready to sink us to perdition.

Reader! thou art now acquainted with the history of this contest! Rejoice in the manner of its termination! And, if thou feelest grateful for the event, retire within thy closet, and pour out thy thanksgivings to the Almighty, for this his unspeakable act of mercy, to thy oppressed fellow-creatures.

*FINIS.*







1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".







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